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General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting
Sunday, 15 September 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obasanjo: On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I join other delegations in congratulating Mr. Kavan on his election as president of the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. I have no doubt that, under his able leadership, the work of this session will be guided to a successful conclusion. Let me also acknowledge the work done by his predecessor, who guided the affairs of the fifty-sixth session with great skill and commitment.

The tireless efforts of our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on behalf of our Organization must not go unnoticed. He deserves our profuse appreciation.

I welcome the newest member of our organization, Switzerland. I have no doubt that this nation will bring unique perspectives to the work of the United Nations, which will enhance the attainment of its objectives.

It is regrettable that international terrorism continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. There is a need for reviewed and concerted efforts on our part to confront the menace until the threat is halted. The various international instruments aimed at combating terrorism deserve our full support. Nigeria remains deeply committed to the fight against terrorism. We are committed to the early elaboration of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

Despite the best intentions and efforts of the international community, a scourge of a different nature continues to threaten many parts of the world. I refer here to the numerous theatres of conflict around the world. People continue to expend valuable energies and resources in fighting each other, often for causes that are unproductive. The international community has a responsibility, not only to design appropriate strategies for a measured and early response to snuff out these conflicts, but also to find ways and means of addressing their root causes, and managing them to a

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peaceful conclusion. Only then will true peace and stability reign in the world.

While it is true that many of these conflicts have their root causes in poverty, ignorance, real and perceived injustice and the absence of basic freedoms, it is equally evident that they are often exacerbated, especially in the case of African conflicts, by the influx of small arms into the continent. Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has continued unabated, with disastrous consequences for many developing countries. We are deeply concerned that manufacturing countries are not doing enough to limit the proliferation of these weapons through appropriate safeguards. We, therefore, call on the international community to consider elaborating a legally binding international instrument to control the supply of these weapons to non-State actors.

The United Nations peacekeeping role is an invaluable one in the global effort to help contain and resolve conflicts around the world. It deserves to be sustained and strengthened. Nigeria is proud to be an active participant in this peacekeeping and peacemaking effort. We remain committed to this responsibility in the conviction that we are our brother's keeper and in the knowledge that there can be no development without peace and stability.

The situation in the Middle East continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. We reaffirm our commitment to the right of the Palestinian people to their own independence, as well as the right of the State of Israel to exist within safe and secure international borders, consistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We therefore welcome the vision and the engagement of the Quartet, as well as other sponsors of the Middle East peace process. I urge the parties in the Middle East conflict to cooperate with the international community and give the ongoing peace process a chance. That becomes imperative because we cannot afford a situation of protracted conflict in the subregion.

Nigeria notes with concern the threat that the situation in Iraq poses to international peace and security. We hold the view that any further escalation of tension would lead to very serious consequences. Nigeria, therefore, urges the parties concerned to exercise caution and restraint and that the matter be resolved in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

There is no shortage of international good will and commitment to development. Various declarations and programmes eloquently address the need for rapid, durable and sustainable development, as well as the desire for the equitable distribution of the world's wealth. In spite of this good will and good intentions on the part of the international community, more than half of humanity lives in abject poverty and ignorance. For many countries in Africa, hunger and disease remain pervasive and deeply rooted. Human development indices for some of the poorest countries are, indeed, unflattering for a world that is so rich but with resources so unevenly distributed.

It is our conviction that urgent, concrete action is required, if the lofty goals we have set for ourselves in the Millennium Declaration to make the world a better place are to be realized. Many developing countries require assistance from the international community in the form of increased official development assistance and foreign direct investment flows and efforts to alleviate their excruciating debt burden and enable them to develop their human and material resource base.

Africa remains committed to the attainment of the goals of the Millennium Declaration. In that regard, I am pleased to state that Africa is seeking to lift itself by its own bootstraps, through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). As members are aware, NEPAD is designed to address, in a sustained and coordinated way, many of the developmental problems associated with Africa's underdevelopment.

We are encouraged by the support that NEPAD has so far received from the international community. The latest evidence of this support is the outcome of the recent meeting of the Group of 8 in Kananaskis, Canada, towards the implementation of the Action Plan. It is hoped that the United Nations high-level segment on NEPAD would record greater successes in the much expected endorsement of that initiative by the international community.

This and other programmes designed to improve the living conditions of the majority of humanity may not yield the desired results if one of the greatest dangers facing humanity today is not addressed with the commitment and urgency it deserves. I am speaking here of the HIV/AIDS pandemic that continues to bring havoc, misery and hopelessness on humanity, especially in Africa where the pandemic is threatening

to wipe out entire generations. For example, it is estimated that out of the 36 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, 75 per cent of them are in sub-Saharan Africa. The consequent toll on the human and material resources of one of the most impoverished regions of the world cannot be overemphasized. Not only is the productive population of Africa being systematically decimated by HIV/AIDS, but efforts to combat this and other diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, are also diverting scarce resources away from development programmes and projects. Massive assistance is therefore required from the international community to complement the efforts of individual countries.

Nigeria will spare no effort to combat these scourges. While we are fully aware of the insidious nature of all of these pestilences, the spread of HIV/AIDS constitutes by far our greatest source of concern. For that reason, Nigeria is active in contribution to and management of the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS.

We have also established a national agency for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS to coordinate the Government's multisectoral approach to the prevention, control and management of the pandemic. We pledge to continue to do our best in this human struggle against this powerful, destructive force, especially by generating awareness in the country about its prevention and spread. We continue, however, to count on the international community to find cures for these diseases, as well as to give assistance to many of our countries in these efforts. The leadership of the United Nations is critical to the success of these efforts.

I wish once again to draw the Assembly's attention to the pernicious issue of corruption and its manifestation at the international level. We have always maintained that it takes two to tango and that the instances of corruption in developing countries have often been supported by encouragement, and inducements and the provision of safe havens by the industrialized countries. Thus, we are strongly advocating that efforts to establish a convention against corruption need to be expedited, so that we can have global action against corruption.

There is no doubt that the United Nations has served humanity well. It has come a long way since its humble beginnings in 1945. It remains the only organization to which all nations, in varying degrees and ways, are associated and committed. Humanity is the better for the existence of the United Nations. The Organization provides the basis for our collective security, international cooperation and solidarity, which are essential for human coexistence. We must therefore continue to fine-tune its implementations to make it more responsive to the needs of the times and to prepare it for the challenges of the future, some of which could not have been envisaged by the founding Members.

I am pleased to note that there is general agreement among us on the need to reform the Organization so as to make it more democratic in structure, more efficient in management and more manageable in size. Nigeria is a major proponent of the envisaged reforms, especially those regarding the structure and working methods of the Security Council. Nigeria envisages a new Security Council in which it will play the role destined by its geopolitical circumstances and the challenges of the twenty-first century. In this regard, we are willing to contribute to efforts and stand ready to support others of like mind and circumstances in this endeavour.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for his statement.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by the Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency the Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with compliments extended to the President following his election to the presidency of this session, to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The admissions of the Democratic Republic of East Timor and of the Swiss Confederation to membership of the Organization are a joyous occasion for my delegation. We welcome and indeed congratulate those two countries and nations as they join our family of nations.

As we meet here today, Lesotho and some other countries of the southern African subregion are in the grip of a most devastating and unprecedented food shortage, as a result of a combination of floods, unseasonable frost and drought, consequent upon climatic changes that have hit the region in the recent past.

On 19 April of this year, when the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho declared a state of famine, it was evident that over half a million people, out of a total of 2.2 million, faced a severe food crisis. Since then, efforts have been made at the national level to address the problem.

Let me take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho and, indeed, on my own behalf, to express our gratitude for the rapid response of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programmes and that of the donor community to the crisis facing my country.

HIV/AIDS, which has emerged as a major health and development threat, continues to be a source of grave concern in my country. Most of those who are infected are between the ages of 15 and 45 and constitute the potential and active workforce in Lesotho.

Of equally great concern is the corrosive effect that HIV/AIDS has on the family structure and on the social fabric of our society. We now have a large number of orphans and child-headed households. Those who are sick not only lack adequate counselling and medicine but also lack care and support.

My delegation therefore makes a special appeal to the international community to provide adequate financial support for the African countries, in order to arrest and, indeed, to redress the spread of HIV/AIDS. In this regard, the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in establishing the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are most welcome. Indeed, Africa as a whole needs unconditional support in many other areas, particularly in the sectors of agriculture, health, nutrition, water and sanitation and education. Undoubtedly, there is a strong link between poverty and the scourge of HIV/AIDS.

The Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, the Doha Ministerial Conference on trade and the World Summit on Sustainable Development provided useful forums for discussing steps that must be taken to remove obstacles to economic growth and sustainable development, particularly in the developing countries. We are hopeful that commitments made by our cooperating partners mark a beginning of the process of helping the least developed countries (LDCs) to translate goals and targets of major global conferences and summits into concrete actions. My delegation reiterates that the marginalization of LDCs can be ended only if they are assisted in integrating profitably into the global economy.

Africa took a very bold and decisive step recently in Durban, South Africa, in launching the African Union. There is no doubt, as many may have observed, that while the road to this Union was strewn with many obstacles, there is now some light at the end of the tunnel. This hope is premised on the principles that have guided us in the last thirty-nine years of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Africa of today is committed to the principles of democracy, stability, peace, security, good governance and the rule of law. Above all, modern Africa is committed to good economic management because it is, indeed, the mismanagement of our economies that has often led to conflicts on the continent.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a home-grown African strategy and an African Union programme for Africa's development. It is a commitment by African leaders to eradicate

poverty and to place the continent on a path of lasting growth and development. My delegation, therefore, appeals for more international support for NEPAD. We believe that the role of the entire international community in supporting NEPAD, and the role of the United Nations in the coordination and synchronization of activities related to ensuring its success, would indeed provide a fresh impetus for Africa's development.

The right of a people to self-determination is a human right and a fundamental principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The peoples of Western Sahara and Palestine, therefore, deserve no less. Hence, my delegation urges that efforts to emancipate these nations be strengthened and speeded up.

Lesotho is gratified that one of the oldest and longest running conflicts in Africa has finally come to an end with the signing of the ceasefire in Luanda, Angola, early this year, by the representatives of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Government of Angola. However, Lesotho and other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, as well as the international community at large, are alarmed by the harsh social and economic conditions that confront internally displaced persons and refugees who return to their homes in Angola.

We appreciate the efforts of the entire United Nations system to address this situation. We are of the view that a lot more still needs to be done for the Angolan people, including the provision of significant additional resources as called for by the United Nations Secretary-General, in order to address the humanitarian needs of the people of Angola.

Despite the temporary disruption of the ceasefire negotiations, my delegation is convinced that the Machakos Protocol signed between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and Army, remains a viable framework for the realization of durable peace in the Sudan. We urge the warring parties to return to the negotiation table in earnest and in good faith.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo has also been a source of concern to us all. We wish to congratulate the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda for the signing of the peace agreements, which should pave the way for the withdrawal of troops from the Democratic Republic of Congo. We believe that this will also ensure that the security concerns of the neighbouring countries are adequately addressed, whilst at the same time creating conditions that are conducive for the Congolese people to live in peace in their own country.

Terrorism has become one of the most pressing concerns of the international community in recent times. The Government of Lesotho has joined other peace-loving members of the international community in waging war against this heinous crime.

The Government of Lesotho is committed to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), and, despite financial and technical constraints, we will continue to discharge our obligations, as stipulated in that resolution.

The shocking images of atrocities perpetrated in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia will forever be embedded in our minds. They have served as a painful reminder to the international community that such crimes should never go unaccounted for and their perpetrators unpunished. In that spirit we hail the landmark agreement reached between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone to establish an independent special court for the prosecution of those responsible for the serious decade-long crimes against humanity committed in the territory of Sierra Leone. We hope that the creation of this special court will contribute greatly to the process of national reconciliation and healing, as well as to the restoration and maintenance of peace in Sierra Leone.

The Government of Lesotho reveres the coming into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, a momentous period when the countries of the world affirmed their intolerance of those who commit crimes against humanity with impunity. We therefore invite those States that have not yet done so, to become party to the Statute, so that we may embark on this noble but difficult pursuit in solidarity.

I should not conclude this statement without making reference to the issue of the reform of the Security Council. The process of democratization is, indeed, very difficult, and yet inevitable. It essentially involves a lot of compromise and understanding on the part of those who cherish and uphold the basic tenets of democracy and equality of States. My delegation therefore wishes to reiterate its concern that this organ

of the United Nations, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security, has itself not yet moved to be more inclusive and more representative. Here again, efforts need to be redoubled and the pace accelerated.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Koffi Panou, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Togo.

Mr. Panou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): The preservation of international peace and security, the fight against terrorism in all its forms, the eradication of poverty throughout the world, the promotion of sustainable development and the establishment of a more just and more human international order are the challenges that we must strive to meet, primarily through the irreplaceable framework of the United Nations. We are meeting once again to find new perspectives in the light of the evolving international situation in order to provide new impetus to our actions by coming together around common objectives.

Before continuing my statement, allow me, on behalf of the delegation of Togo and on my own behalf, to address our warmest congratulations to Mr. Kavan on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. His election to that high post is a tribute not only to him personally, but also to his great and beautiful country. I assure him of the fullest cooperation of my country towards the success of his mission.

I also take this opportunity to convey to his predecessor our full gratitude for the effective way in which he led the work of the previous session.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who works tirelessly to strengthen peace and security throughout the world, we reiterate our high appreciation of his commitment and dedication.

I congratulate Switzerland and Timor-Leste on their admission into the great United Nations family.

Democracy, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights and good governance are factors in development and peace and values to which Togo has long adhered and to which we are deeply attached. It is in the spirit that we must consider the political reforms that were launched 15 years ago at the initiative of our Head of State. These reforms seek to build a peaceful democracy based on the widest possible national consensus and rooted in the historical and socio-cultural realities of our country.

Today, our efforts have led to the establishment and effective operation of almost all the institutions called for in the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, to the restoration of State authority and security and to the revitalization of the national economy. We have achieved these results despite the difficulties that hindered the process of democratization as a result of a poorly begun transition, and despite all kinds of manoeuvres and obstacles constantly set up by an unhelpful opposition. Priority has been placed above all on the continuation of political reforms to ensure that they are undertaken in a climate of restored calm and ongoing concertation among all the political forces of our nation.

It was in this context that, at the initiative of the Head of State, Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadema, we launched an inter-Togolese dialogue among all the country's principal political actors that led to the signing of a framework agreement in July 1999. The implementation of that agreement allowed the establishment of a dialogue between the Government and the opposition on such essential political questions as the organizational modalities of early legislative elections.

It was the will of the Head of State and of the Government to ensure that these elections, open to all political groups without exception, should take place in a climate of peace and security, with the necessary guarantees of transparency and legality. It is also our aim that, at the completion of this electoral process, a new phase should begin in our country's political life with the revitalization of a National Assembly in which political groups that wish to be represented can be so.

All of these achievements, which strengthen political pluralism in Togo, deserve the support and encouragement of our partners, particularly those in

Europe, with a view to normalizing our relations of cooperation. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. As I stressed a year ago from this very rostrum, the people of Togo do not deserve the treatment they have received. It is now clear that the rash imposition of sanctions as a means of political pressure entails limits beyond which such measures become ineffective and run counter to morality and to the duty of international solidarity.

I wish once again to launch an urgent appeal for the resumption of the cooperation that Togo has a right to expect from the international community as an act of solidarity, support and encouragement for the indisputable efforts that have been made by my Government towards the development of the country and the consolidation of the bases of our democracy in a climate of peace, stability and national harmony.

Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is well known that we in Togo have made peace and national security our credo, given that no undertaking for sustainable development can be successfully carried out if the recourse to violence prevails over dialogue, concertation and mutual respect and if the world continues to face such terrorist acts as the tragedy of 11 September 2001. Those terrible events, which are still vivid in our minds, require us, individually and collectively, to respond appropriately to the threats represented by terrorism. Togo, which has been a repeated victim of terrorist aggression, understands the importance of the challenge and spares no effort in assuming its share of the responsibility in this struggle.

We must here welcome the speed with which the United Nations has reacted to this problem and contributed to the emergence of an acute awareness of the phenomenon and the dangers it entails for all mankind. Today, as was the case a year ago, it is imperative that we recognize the urgency and need to pursue this campaign. It is clear that we must seek together the factors that will contribute to maintaining peace in all its dimensions.

Yes, crises and armed conflicts still afflict the world, unfortunately, in Africa and elsewhere. While it may be true that some glimmers of hope have emerged in Africa with the resolution of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and with respect to the settlement of other crises, the situation remains alarming. It is alarming in the Great Lakes region and the Mano River region, which is again experiencing a genuine security problem, with major humanitarian consequences.

Whether we are talking about the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Mano river region, the Sudan, Somalia or any other country affected by crises, we reaffirm that only dialogue and negotiation can lead to peace and ensure the lasting settlement of disputes. We therefore urge the parties to such crises and armed conflicts to be more courageous and demonstrate greater political will so as to give peace a chance through negotiating processes already under way and by respecting and effectively implementing the provisions of agreements that have already been signed.

In this respect, we welcome the recent announcement of the withdrawal, beginning next week, of Rwandan troops from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we hope that the implementation of this decision will strengthen the process under way.

The situation in the Middle East also remains worrying. We must find a solution to the vicious circle of violence — violence breeding violence. Togo has always stressed that violence can lead only to bitterness and resentment and that it further perpetuates violence. This cannot be said enough: dialogue and negotiation are the only means that should be used to settle disputes. We therefore strongly urge both Palestinians and Israelis to end the vicious circle of violence and immediately take up negotiations with a view to achieving a just, comprehensive and final settlement of the question of Palestine, which is at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East. Of course, such a settlement would require recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to a viable Palestinian State. But it would also entail the recognition of the equally legitimate rights of the Israeli people to live in peace and complete security within internationally recognized borders.

This session began just a few days after the conclusion of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, at which the international community stressed more than ever before the need to protect humankind and the natural world. Now more than ever we must protect humankind in its multifaceted character and the environment in all of its variety.

I am pleased to note, too, that this session of the General Assembly is taking place during a historic time for our continent of Africa. Indeed, two years ago, on 12 July 2000, at Lomé, Togo, African countries laid the groundwork for a new Africa by adopting, before the whole world, the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The African heads of State or Government solemnly launched the new continent-wide organization at Durban in July, thereby translating into reality their determination to shape a new destiny for Africa.

Some might be tempted to say that, despite the establishment of the African Union, nothing decisive will be done and that the continent will still be trying to find itself while stagnating in underdevelopment. It is true that, given the current economic and social situation, such pessimism could be warranted. Indeed, our continent of Africa is still the principal victim of an economic order that is out of balance and unfair — one that all too often deprives it of the fruits of its own labour.

Unstable commodity prices, yearly increases in the price of crucial capital goods, debt, limited access to the markets of industrialized countries for our finished and semi-finished goods and the competition with which our products have to contend as a result of the export subsidy policies of certain rich countries — policies that benefit their own industries — are seriously hampering the development of our countries.

Today more than ever it is vital to ask how Africa can reconcile the repayment of its debt with the implementation of its economic growth and development goals. Turning the current situation around is a task that we must undertake through reflection and action.

The establishment of a new structure — the African Union — marks a decisive turning point in the history of our continent, which, more than ever before, needs the invaluable support of the international community in carrying out its development programmes. We are aware that Africa cannot rise to the challenge of growth and development unless it becomes organized to mobilize and make the best use of its resources using external aid only as a complement to its own efforts. We earnestly hope that the consolidation of various subregional organizations for economic integration, together with the synergistic implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, will provide Africa with the means to achieve its ambitions.

In conclusion, I should like to stress that the new international context and the multidimensional nature of the problems to be faced mean that we must work with greater determination and solidarity within the United Nations in order to push back insecurity, poverty and misery. In this regard, we must consider providing this shared Organization with the wherewithal and the increased resources to enable it to achieve peace and economic and social development for our peoples.

That is the price to be paid for the future of humankind. I earnestly hope that the United Nations will, more than ever before, become the ideal tool to implement our ideals of peace, justice, progress and liberty for the benefit of our peoples.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to sincerely congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. I should also like to express my deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, for his tireless efforts in conducting the proceedings of the fifty-sixth session, as well as of the twenty-seventh special session of the Assembly, on children.

I should also like to express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his continued efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations and to enable it to achieve the noble and lofty objectives for which it was created.

Furthermore, I am pleased to extend my congratulations to the Swiss Confederation on its having joined the Organization. I would like also to congratulate East Timor on attaining its independence. It is also my pleasure to welcome the establishment of the African Union, the successor to the Organization of African Unity.

This session was convened on the first anniversary of 11 September, an event that terrified the international community, shocked the human conscience and unified international efforts to face up

to an enemy that has no religion, ethnicity, race or nationality. That enemy is terrorism.

On this painful anniversary, it is incumbent upon us to again extend our condolences and sympathy to the United States of America and its friendly people, and to the families of the victims everywhere, and to condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We affirm our support for all international efforts that seek to combat its elements and to uproot it.

In line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and with international efforts, the Kingdom of Bahrain has sought, since attaining independence, to build a modern State and a civil society in which the human being is the focal point. Such a human being would be prepared and qualified to cope with the political, economic and social requirements of modern life.

Moreover, taking firm and confident steps, the Kingdom of Bahrain affirms its commitment to the development and modernization process taking place under the leadership of His Majesty Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain. My country was proclaimed a constitutional monarchy following a plebiscite on our National Action Charter, designed to promote democratic and constitutional life in Bahrain. The municipal elections in May 2002, in which women participated both as voters and as candidates, were a success; preparations are now under way for parliamentary elections, which are to take place in October.

The Government and the people have made a concerted effort to ensure success in the democratic and developmental process, as set out in the Kingdom's Constitution and in its policies and programmes in all fields. In this regard, the Kingdom has acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Civic activities have been enhanced and the number of non-governmental organizations has risen. These have been promoted so that all the people of Bahrain may participate in expanding national efforts to ensure the well-being of the people and respect for human rights in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural areas.

The Kingdom of Bahrain takes pride in these achievements, which have been recognized by the United Nations *Human Development Report* for 2002, which ranked the Kingdom of Bahrain high among all countries of the world and, for the sixth time, first among sisterly Arab States. Furthermore, the *Arab Human Development Report 2002* has also mentioned our achievements, showing once again the success of the Kingdom's democratic and development strategy in all areas.

Moreover, the leadership and the people of the Kingdom of Bahrain are proud that, in a report recently published by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Bahrain was ranked 42nd among the 87 countries included in the report, and first in the Arab world.

The Kingdom of Bahrain attaches great importance to the question of regional security, because of the repercussions it has on the security and stability of States and peoples. Accordingly, Bahrain has consistently sought to consolidate neighbourly relations and mutual respect with its neighbouring States. Bahrain looks forward to the peaceful resolution of the question of the three Emirates islands, in accordance with the principles and rules of international law and in a brotherly spirit of understanding, on the basis of recent positive developments in the relations between the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in the light of the direct contacts that have taken place recently, in particular those between the United Arab Emirates and Iran.

Furthermore, the Arab Summit, held in Beirut last March, confirmed the necessity and importance of security and stability in the Gulf region and of creating a propitious atmosphere for the restoration of normal relations among the States of the region. It called upon Iraq to complete the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, especially those relating to Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners of war; to cooperate with the United Nations with a view to alleviating the suffering of the people of Iraq; and to avoid any confrontation that might threaten the States and peoples of the region or the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, and that might be used as a pretext for interfering in Iraq's internal affairs.

The Middle East is currently facing great danger as a result of Israel's policy in the occupied Palestinian territories and of its perpetration of the most heinous crimes against the Palestinian people, such as assassinations, blockades and the destruction of the infrastructure and the economy. The events that took

place in the Jenin refugee camp and in the Gaza Strip, along with the daily events that occur in all other Palestinian cities, are clear indications of the Israeli Government's aggression and violation of international law and norms and of its unwillingness to accept peace or comply with the international agreements it has signed.

Furthermore, the Palestinian people are still resisting this ferocious assault with great courage and determination, thus asserting their right to fight the occupation and emphasizing their belief in their just cause, while upholding their legitimate leadership and defending their national rights, as endorsed by the international community, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and other relevant resolutions, the latest being Council resolution 1397 (2002). They are also upholding the principle of land for peace and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on their national land, with Jerusalem as its capital.

On the basis of its principles and in support of justice, Bahrain has always stood by the brotherly people of Palestine. It affirms its full support for the Arab peace initiative adopted at the Arab Summit held at Beirut in March 2002 on the basis of the vision offered by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That vision provides for an end to the Middle East conflict, the establishment of normal relations with Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories to the borders of 4 June 1967, including withdrawal from the Syrian Arab Golan Heights and the remaining Lebanese occupied territories, and a just settlement of the question of Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948.

The oppression to which the Palestinian people are subjected and the ongoing situation that threatens security and peace in the Middle East and the world require immediate intervention by the Security Council and the international community to stop Israeli practices against the Palestinian people and to reactivate the Arab peace initiative at the regional and international levels. That initiative is a viable basis for any move towards the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Bahrain has welcomed the initiative of the United States Secretary of State with respect to convening a peace conference on the Middle East, on the basis of ideas and principles put forward by the Arab Summit in the Arab peace initiative and of the relevant international resolutions. It hopes that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East will thus be achieved, leading to stability and security, ending the cycle of conflict and violence, and bringing instead a cycle of fruitful cooperation among the countries of the region.

Bahrain has also reaffirmed this position by welcoming the positive ideas in President Bush's 24 June 2002 statement on the Middle East. Those ideas were reiterated in his statement before the General Assembly last Thursday and related to the settlement of the Middle East conflict within the framework of the resolutions of international legitimacy, and with a view to establishing a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

The Arab side, through the Arab peace initiative and by accepting the ideas that President Bush has put forward, has clearly demonstrated its interest in security and stability in the region. The Israeli side has yet to detail what plans it has for peace and what position it has taken vis-à-vis the Arab peace initiative and the ideas put forward by President Bush. What is needed now is to translate those ideas and initiatives into plans and practical steps that benefit peace and put an end to the present deteriorating situation.

In the light of Bahrain's religious and cultural traditions, as reflected in our Constitution and national laws and as reaffirmed by our policies that focus, inter alia, on the right to life, security and peace, we would like to reaffirm our strong rejection of all forms and manifestations of terrorism. We would also welcome the convening under United Nations auspices of an international conference on terrorism, with a view to reaching an internationally agreed definition of terrorism that differentiates between unacceptable terrorist acts and legitimate struggle and resistance by people against foreign occupation to achieve national liberation and self-determination, and to defend themselves in accordance with the United Nations Charter, to which we adhere in word and deed.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has followed with great interest the developments in Afghanistan, a country that has lacked stability and has suffered the ravages of war for many years. We welcome the measures taken by the Government of Afghanistan with a view to

promoting security and stability and restoring normal life for its people. We have also cooperated fully with the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) on financial and logistical measures against terrorist activities, in line with the concept of collective action within the United Nations.

Bahrain has supported all initiatives to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones and has supported other confidence-building measures in regions such as the Middle East, where we have supported the creation of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. We call upon all our neighbours to support this idea in order to release resources that could be used for the prosperity and development of peoples. We call on the United Nations to exert pressure on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Dialogue and tolerance among States and peoples contribute to the promotion of understanding and the maintenance of international peace and security. Based on that conviction, and emphasizing the importance we attach to General Assembly resolution 53/22 of 16 November 1998 concerning the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the Kingdom of Bahrain has hosted a seminar organized in cooperation with the Government of Japan. A number of internationally known intellectuals from the Arab and Islamic worlds and from Japan participated in the seminar, which was convened last March and was entitled "The Dialogue among Civilizations: The Islamic World and Japan". The seminar sought to promote dialogue between Arab-Islamic civilizations and other civilizations so that different cultures may grow closer to one another.

In furtherance of this approach, the Kingdom of Bahrain will also host the tenth session of the Islamic-Christian Dialogue Conference, to be held from 28 to 30 October 2002. The objective is to promote better understanding between world religions and cultures, and to enhance interaction and exchange in order to preserve the progress that has been made and to invigorate an informed outlook for the future, wherein cooperation in the interest of the entire human race, without discrimination, can take place.

In conclusion, I would like to state that, thanks to cooperative efforts, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, recently held in Johannesburg, provided a favourable opportunity for the review and evaluation of achievements made over the past 10 years, the identification of impediments and challenges, the development of strategies and the identification of objectives and priorities for joint action. It is our hope that all States will implement the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit and will address the challenges facing us all, especially the developing States.

In that context, the Kingdom of Bahrain would like once again to affirm the importance of practical and effective implementation of the Millennium Declaration with regard to development and the role of the international community and international organizations in supporting national efforts in that field.

We are confident that the United Nations, with the determination, political will and hard work of its Member States, is capable of efforts that will help us achieve our shared goals of just peace, economic prosperity and social justice throughout the world. It is in our interest to cooperate with one another to make the United Nations the main engine of our activities, in order to achieve a better world: one of peace, security, prosperity and justice for all peoples and all States.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara'.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. I am confident that the many posts he has occupied will facilitate his task in leading the deliberations of the General Assembly to their desired objectives. I also express our appreciation to his predecessor for the efforts he made to bring the deliberations of the fifty-sixth session to a successful conclusion.

I would be remiss if I failed to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his efforts to preserve the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. I wish him success as he strives to contribute successfully to the just solution of the problems that the international community faces.

I would also like wholeheartedly to welcome Switzerland as the long-awaited newest Member of the Organization. We look forward to cooperating with it in promoting the principles of the United Nations and safeguarding its Charter.

This session of the General Assembly has been convened one year after the 11 September attacks, which had an impact on the current international situation. In the aftermath of the attacks, many grave issues remained unresolved, awaiting effective solutions, and many questions went unanswered. The state of confusion, incertitude and tension on the international scene results from the feeling of the majority of the world's people that they have lost their orientation. This results from a tendency on the part of some to use practices that can be best characterized as unilateral, expressing an appetite for hegemony and monopoly over the wealth of others.

The Middle East region is a case in point. After decades of struggle waged by the people of the region to liberate themselves from colonialism and foreign domination and to try to eliminate injustices resulting from the redrawing of maps and the enforcement of artificial borders between them, the people of the region are facing a more vicious attack today than they faced during earlier colonial periods.

The Arab countries have condemned the attacks against the United States of America. They have expressed sympathy for the families of the victims. Nonetheless, a year after the event that was officially linked to the Al Qaeda organization and the Taliban movement, the world wonders how those accusations were re-channelled so as to be levelled against the Arab countries to such a degree that some of them are being threatened, while none of them had anything to do with the attacks.

The irony is starker since justification for the accusation is usually linked to the presence of some Al Qaeda elements in those countries or to the fact that such elements are nationals of those countries, while it is public knowledge that elements of the Al Qaeda organization are present in more than 60 countries around the world, including the United States of America, according to official American statements.

Since the end of the Second World War, our region has witnessed a series of wars and destruction as a result of an Israeli approach based on occupation, settlement building and the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland. The United Nations has made efforts to find a just solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict. To that end, the United Nations has adopted hundreds of resolutions that Israel has refused to implement, in a stark challenge to the will of the international community. Israel continues to occupy the Golan, the West Bank and Gaza and parts of Lebanese territory.

When the Arab countries unanimously launched their peace initiative at the Beirut summit in March 2002, Israel responded by launching a widescale military attack against Palestinian cities, villages and camps in the West Bank. Israel's defiance of international legitimacy assumed proportions that have been condemned by international public opinion, particularly when the Israeli Government refused to receive the fact-finding mission to investigate the details of the massacre at the Jenin refugee camp.

Israel has claimed that the crimes it has carried against the Palestinian people under occupation have been carried out in self-defence and in the war against terrorism. We see how Israel has manipulated the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. In that context, it is important to stress that silence in the face of such manipulation amounts to total disregard for human values, as much as it is disregard for defenceless Palestinian souls.

Without going into details of the Israeli attacks and violations in which American weapons were used, the only way out of the crisis faced by the peoples of the region is by making Israel abide by relevant Security Council resolutions, which thus far are 28 in number. Is it reasonable for the world to request Iraq to implement Security Council resolutions, while some help Israel remain above international law? It is indeed legitimate for us to ask the United States to distance itself from the aggressive Israeli practices and to apply to Israel the American law that prohibits the use of American weapons against a third party. It is indeed odd that the United States considers Israel to be acting in self-defence in occupied territories, which is not in keeping with Security Council resolutions in whose drafting and adoption the United States itself has participated since the founding of the United Nations.

Just and comprehensive peace in our region can be achieved only through the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy that stress the need for Israel to withdraw from all the Arab territories

occupied since June 1967 and to safeguard the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

Much has been said recently about the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility that international terrorists might acquire such weapons. As is well known, that danger is not limited to one region. Rather, it exists in many regions of the world. It is regrettable that certain parties focus only on some Arab and Muslim countries, and not on others, ignoring in the meantime Israel's nuclear arsenal. All the countries of the region have expressed, year after year, their readiness to make the Middle East region a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological.

Today more than ever before, we call for urgent and serious efforts to make our region free of all weapons of mass destruction, under the supervision of the United Nations. We declare from this rostrum that all the Arab countries are prepared to establish such a zone, provided that Israel will agree to establish such a zone and to submit all its nuclear facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as have the other Middle East, Arab and Muslim countries of the region.

The majority vote that Syria won upon submitting its candidacy for membership to the Security Council highlights the appreciation of these countries for Syria's constructive role in supporting the United Nations.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is well known that Syria has always been in the forefront of countries whose respect for international legitimacy constitutes a principled position in their foreign policy. We agree with the Secretary-General about the necessity of avoiding unilateral measures and resorting instead to working within the framework of the United Nations, which represents international legitimacy.

In that light, we see no justification for igniting a new war in the Middle East. We strongly believe that striking Iraq, which no longer occupies the land of others, while keeping silent about the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, represents blind bias and a distorted vision of the real situation in the Middle East.

The international community is committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. We cannot recall anyone doubting that commitment. We also stress that it is the right of the Iraqi people alone to decide their future without any interference in their internal affairs. It is the duty of all Members of our Organization to commit themselves to the implementation of United Nations resolutions. In keeping with that commitment, Syria supports the resumption of dialogue between Iraq and the Secretary-General with the objective of reaching a political solution that meets the requirements of the Security Council and that grants Iraq hope of peace, security and the lifting of the sanctions imposed on it, especially as Iraq has officially recognized the State of Kuwait and its international borders.

Syria has expressed its satisfaction at positive developments in the African continent. We are confident that the establishment of the African Union will have a positive impact on the present and future of that continent and on solving the urgent problems it faces. In that regard, we look forward with true hope to the implementation of agreements recently signed by the parties concerned to end the fighting in Angola, Congo and the Great Lakes region.

Syria also expresses its satisfaction at the increasing international support to end the embargo against Cuba.

Syria further welcomes the high-level talks between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea and expresses the hope that this rapprochement between the two Koreas will help achieve the aspirations of the people of the Korean peninsula by peaceful means.

The Syrian Arab Republic hopes that peace and stability will prevail in Afghanistan in the interest of the Afghan people, who have long suffered the scourges of war and internal strife.

Syria supports the efforts of the Government of the Sudan to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the Sudanese people and calls for a ceasefire in the south of Sudan as a prelude to the resumption of dialogue.

Syria supports the Artah agreement reached by the Somalis and deems it the most viable solution for achieving national reconciliation in Somalia.

The world's peoples are passing through a difficult test at this critical juncture; the choices of even big and influential countries, are getting narrower rather than broader due to the absence of a just world order. It is to be regretted that the voices of those who call for war rise above the voices of those who call for peace and that those who usurp the rights of people and encroach on their dignity are drowning out the voices of those who defend the rights of people regarding their territory and freedom.

But despite this grim picture, right will, in the final analysis, triumph over injustice. That is the correct reading of the history of nations and civilizations; there is no going back. Arab Syria's belief in its rights and the rights of other nations cannot be shaken or undermined by hegemony and the arrogance of power. We are convinced of the possibility of building a world in which all coexist in peace and security, a world free of occupation and hegemony, a world in which all peoples equally share the resources of our globe and the fruits of science and technology in order to achieve prosperity for all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joap de Hoop Scheffer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Mr. De Hoop Scheffer (Netherlands): The smoke at ground zero, only a few blocks away from here, has cleared. But the empty space where the twin towers once stood continues to send shivers throughout the world. The unspeakable events that occurred a year ago have become engraved in our collective memory. What occurred here was an unprecedented and direct attack on universal values: values such as mutual respect, such as tolerance, such as the rule of law — values that form the very basis of the United Nations.

Over the past year, the world community has proven its determination to defy terrorism. Today, the Netherlands not only reiterates its attachment to these values but also underlines a responsibility, both individual and collective, for upholding and protecting them. And that responsibility calls for a real commitment.

Religions, races and traditions make our world colourful and diverse. But underneath our different feathers, we share a common skin: principles we all adhere to — or should adhere to — regardless of our religious beliefs or race. Mutual respect, the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion are among the most important ones.

We cannot, however, confine ourselves to merely restating these principles. Without real commitment they would quickly evaporate and thus become empty words.

It goes without saying that the Netherlands is fully committed: it is a dedicated international partner, both out of choice and out of necessity, in the United Nations, the European Union, NATO and other organizations, or in common endeavours such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Netherlands will continue to dedicate 0.8 per cent of its annual gross domestic product to development cooperation and urges others to do the same.

Behind that commitment is the unshakeable belief that no country can hope to succeed on its own in whatever policy area. In this respect we take to heart the wise words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan: "Even the most powerful countries know that they need to work with others, in multilateral institutions, to achieve their aims" (*A/57/PV.2*). We therefore also welcome the United States decision, announced from this rostrum by President Bush, to return to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Netherlands not only feels an individual responsibility for the defence of universal values, but a shared responsibility as well. Let me elaborate on this today in relation to four key areas of concern: the development of the African continent, uncontrolled migration, the continuing threat of terrorism and the situation in the Middle East.

Africa continues its struggle towards development and prosperity. It cannot and must not do so all by itself. We all share a responsibility for eradicating poverty and enhancing Africa's global integration.

Too often the African continent is associated only with misery and instability. In reality the number of conflicts in or between African countries has decreased. The creation of the African Union, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, testify to the continent's own commitment. The Netherlands very much welcomes this acknowledgement by African leaders of their own responsibility for building a

prosperous and peaceful continent. For us, this is essential for adding our own efforts and resources to achieve that objective. It also means that African leaders, like all of us, can be held accountable for their governance and policies, their performance in the field of human rights and their respect for the rule of law.

In partnership with African countries the Netherlands will continue to do its share in providing the necessary resources. For us, development cooperation is not just providing money, but also a policy integrating the promotion of good governance, security and stability. Is the world to assist in alleviating the effects of natural disasters when in fact they are, at least in part, man-made?

Responsibility also extends to the private sector, particularly when it comes to fighting the disease that undermines all efforts at development: HIV/AIDS. However, for the fight against AIDS to be successful, it needs to be fully endorsed by African Governments. That means: acknowledgement of the problem and its causes, an open discussion of possible strategies and addressing its consequences for society.

Africa concerns us all. Its problems affect us all. Poverty, conflict and violations of human rights contribute to an ever-increasing migration. This phenomenon is, however, by no means unique for the African continent. We need to deal with it effectively, regardless of whether we represent countries of origin, countries of transit or those of destination. Migration is robbing countries of origin of a vitally important resource: human capital. For neighbouring countries or countries of transit it can be a source of instability. For countries of destination, it often creates problems of integration.

Here again, common values are at stake. Governments should do everything in their power to avoid people having no other choice than fleeing home. The number one priority is addressing the underlying causes of uncontrolled migration.

In the meantime, we need to support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which is stretched to its limits dealing with a problem for which it was not devised. The Netherlands welcomes UNHCR's efforts to establish and implement an integrated policy aimed at the repatriation of refugees, coupled with their re-integration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Obviously, these efforts have to be dovetailed with those of other United Nations agencies active in those areas.

It is precisely through such an integrated approach that we can hope to achieve results. UNHCR's mix of policy areas obviously has to be complemented by that of security. That is one of the reasons why the Netherlands is involved in peacekeeping or similar operations in Bosnia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Afghanistan. Security is the quintessential consideration for those who are to return to their homes. Without security, resettlement and recovery remain pious wishes. Money spent on security is money well spent.

In the year following 11 September 2001 the international community has effectively taken its responsibility. Its joint efforts have focussed on bringing about more security and increased stability in Afghanistan. Much has been accomplished: a regime hostile both to the Afghan people and to our commonly shared values has been ousted. Subsequently, our collective efforts have helped establish an elected Government and begin the reconstruction of a disrupted society.

There can be no leniency towards countries that reject universal values, because a country that rejects tolerance, endorses intolerance. A country that does not guarantee the rule of law invites anarchy and injustice. The international community must help countries that are unable to do so themselves. It must try to persuade those that are uncooperative and it must be ready, if necessary, to act against those that are unwilling.

The terrorist attacks have also shown that religion, for some, unfortunately, is a source of inspiration not for good, but for destructive purposes. The hijacking of planes should not result in the hijacking of an entire religion. Proper education, freedom of opinion and speech, secular or representative government can help contain religious extremism. Here again, we have a collective as well as an individual responsibility for upholding and protecting common values.

What we need is a dialogue between countries, civilizations and religions. But we also need action to go after the sources of religious extremism.

That same commitment leaves us no choice but to continue to work towards peace in the Middle East.

The instability there, the lurking dangers of religious extremism and weapons of mass destruction require our joint dedication.

The many different actors in the Middle East share a duty to restrain violence and curtail extremism. Stability in the region is an indivisible interest, not only for the region itself but far beyond. The countries in the region have prime responsibility for ensuring that their citizens can live in freedom and an environment of tolerance and respect. But the international community has a role to play as well. Here in particular, we expect the Security Council to take its responsibilities to end the Iraqi regime's systematic non-compliance with a range of earlier resolutions. The inspectors should be allowed to return, yesterday rather than tomorrow. The credibility of the United Nations system is at stake.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be dealt with solely by concentrating on the fight against terrorism. Terrorism must stop, not only because of the human suffering it causes, but also because it is utterly counterproductive. The Palestinian people should ask themselves where this violence has got them. On the other hand, Israel cannot defer indefinitely answering the question as to when and how it is to live side by side with a Palestinian neighbour. Finding a solution again requires true commitment from all parties concerned and a dialogue across regional, religious and other borders. That involves us all.

In conclusion, since we share values, we share responsibility for upholding them. That should determine our commitment to addressing the problems that I mentioned. Our commonly held values should guide our dealings with each other — between individuals as well as between countries. It is only when we acknowledge what we have in common that we can find the strength to overcome our differences. If there is one thing that our presence here, one year after 11 September 2001, makes clear, it is this: our belief in freedom and tolerance is unshakeable, and so is our commitment to uphold them.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Francophonie of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping.

Mr. Ping (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Gabon is pleased to see Mr. Kavan presiding over the work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, which is being held at a time when the need to strengthen international cooperation to resolve the world's problems is indeed vital. His election is a recognition by the international community of the role that his country, the Czech Republic, plays in the promotion of freedom and peace.

To his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, we express our satisfaction at the excellent job he did as President of the General Assembly at the previous session.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, we convey our gratitude and support for his forceful work on behalf of international peace and security.

Gabon welcomes the admission of the Swiss Confederation and the imminent accession of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to membership of the United Nations. They swell the ranks of our illustrious United Nations family, confirming its universality.

I should like to pursue my statement by evoking the metaphor of the river. Each wave lapping the banks has its own character, but they all call from the same river. They express multiplicity in consistency. The same can be said of our annual sessions. This session is a new wave in the mighty river of the United Nations, a new cycle in the global rhythm of the world. Today, many of us feel hope tinged with scepticism.

Two years ago, in September 2000, we held the Millennium Summit in this very Hall. It was certainly the point of departure of a new global movement towards more peace, prosperity, justice and humanism. At the very moment when we imagined ourselves to have taken a great step forward towards the building of a better world for all, we were stunned on 11 September 2001 by the ghastly terrorist attacks perpetrated here on American soil. Those attacks of violence, which we all condemned, eclipsed our dreams and reminded us of the beast lurking within each of us.

Gabon was one of the very first nations to commit itself to implementing the provisions of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) by taking legal action to prevent and combat terrorism. Although significant, progress made since then under the auspices of the Security Council in the campaign against international terrorism needs to be strengthened. That is why negotiations on a draft general convention on international terrorism must go on with a view to its

speedy adoption. In the same spirit, the conclusion of ongoing discussions on a convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism will supplement the international anti-terrorism legal framework.

The cloud of uncertainty looming over our collective security is darkened by the Israel-Palestinian crisis. It is regrettable to note that renewed violence in the Middle East is calling all previous efforts into question. The international community must mobilize to rekindle the flame of peace in that region, which has been beset by ceaseless violence for decades. Gabon encourages both sides to resume dialogue and negotiation with a view to implementing the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which stress the need for the coexistence of the Palestinian State with the State of Israel, with respect for secure and internationally recognized borders.

Similarly, Gabon hopes that the current talks between the two Koreas will help allay tensions between the two countries.

Positive developments in the overall situation in Africa attest to the continent's gradual return to the path of peace, stability and unity. Fratricidal conflicts are increasingly giving way to the emergence of an African awareness marked by the determination to see the ideals of peace prevail and to devote ourselves to development. This wave of hope has been justified by recent developments, particularly in the Great Lakes region. We are convinced that this progress will give impetus to the peace process in that region. Accordingly, we believe that it is time to convene an international conference on the region in order to consolidate peace there.

However, the progress that has been made in resolving conflicts in Africa should not blind us to the situations in Angola, Liberia, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau, which, having been destabilized by years of conflict, are now facing enormous difficulties, particularly in the humanitarian area, in restoring domestic peace and security. The international community must lend its support to the economic and social recovery efforts of those countries so as to prevent them from being caught up yet again in the spiral of violence.

The world's economic and social situation is disquieting. The commitments that we undertook at the Millennium Summit, and which were reiterated at the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development, have yet to bear fruit. Globalization, which we thought would permit the harmonious integration of all countries into the international community through the process of trade liberalization, has not yet attained the hoped-for results. On the contrary, we see that there has been an increase in social inequality and a widening gap between industrialized and developing countries.

Efforts by developing countries, particularly in the areas of consolidating democracy, the rule of law, good governance, the fight against poverty and the rational protection and management of the environment, are still not being matched by the developed countries, as attested to by the continued diminution of external resources for development and the drop in foreign investment. One must add to that the growth of conditionalities and other barriers that could keep those countries in a state of permanent economic and social stagnation.

Among the elements contributing to that state of affairs is the heavy burden of debt. In fact, several developing countries, including Gabon, devote almost half of their budgetary resources to repayment of debt, while at the same time they must find solutions to the many problems that inhibit their development. We have the firm conviction that, by reducing the indebtedness of our countries to a sustainable level, we can allocate more resources to priorities such as universal education and health, housing, poverty reduction and environmental management. We hope that the promise made by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to extend the current debt relief mechanisms to other developing countries — including those with intermediate incomes, such as Gabon — will quickly become reality.

In order to respond to those concerns, Africa has established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is a true development programme based on good governance, respect for human rights and the strengthening of democracy, peace and security, which are preconditions for the economic recovery of the continent. That programme calls on the international community for effective support. Members can easily understand why the African countries place much hope in the debate that the General Assembly will devote to NEPAD

tomorrow, 16 September, in which the President of Gabon will take part.

Malaria and, above all, HIV/AIDS are major obstacles to Africa's development that could ultimately deprive the continent of much of its human potential. We are pleased that the First Ladies of Africa have understood the gravity of this problem by creating, in partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), an organization to combat malaria and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, called the Organization of the First Ladies of Africa against HIV/AIDS. We are convinced that this new structure — headed by the First Lady of Gabon, Ms. Edith Lucie Bongo, whose self-sacrifice and dynamism are well known — will complement the efforts of African States in combating this scourge. We also expect strong action from the international community to accompany our efforts in the fight against the pandemic.

The preservation of global ecosystems is another subject of concern for the world. Only a few weeks ago, heads of State or Government met at Johannesburg, South Africa, for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Despite the momentum it generated, the Summit did not reduce the risks that weigh on our environment. We think that, in view of the lack of progress in implementing the recommendations of environmental conferences organized over the past decade, it is becoming increasingly urgent that States implement Agenda 21 and the other relevant international instruments.

Gabon, for its part, has just created a zone of national parks that covers 10 per cent of our national territory. Those protected areas are proof of our contribution to the process of preserving global ecological balance in general and to the management and conservation of Africa's massive tropical forest in particular. That is why we welcome the launching in Johannesburg, by United States Secretary of State Colin Powell, of the initiative to preserve the flora and fauna of the countries of the Congo river basin.

Positive trends in the world can be guaranteed only in an institutional environment bearing the seal of universality. The United Nations, in our view, embodies such an environment, where there must be true multilateral cooperation, based on justice, equality, solidarity and the participation of all. It is evident that, in order to be a global centre for interaction and debate, the United Nations needs reforms. Those reforms, for which we have been calling for several years, are unavoidable if we wish to see the continued existence of the United Nations, whose membership has increased constantly since its creation in 1945. Reform of the Organization must be based on a reaffirmation of the purposes and principles of the Charter, primary among which are international peace and security.

The International Court of Justice, in a 1949 advisory opinion concerning certain expenditures of the United Nations, stated that it was natural to give top priority to international peace and security, because the other purposes could not be attained unless that fundamental condition were met. International peace and security are the preconditions for development, which in turn is a way to create the stability and well-being that are necessary to guarantee peaceful and friendly relations among nations.

The United Nations is the property of humanity. It was born out of awareness of the horrors of the Second World War, in which all peoples participated, including Africans. We wish to see Africa play a more important role in the Organization, particularly in the Security Council, by being given at least one permanent seat with the same privileges as the other members with the same status. Furthermore, Africa has been recognized by the United Nations as a top priority, and we are convinced that the creation of a Secretariat office concerned exclusively with African issues would remedy the shortcomings we have seen in the implementation of previous programmes devoted to Africa, such as the United Nations Programme for the Economic Redressing and Development of Africa and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Our collective action for development will not be truly effective unless we use dialogue and cooperation as tools for global solidarity based on the promotion of partnerships. Today or never, we must reaffirm that we all belong to the one and only human race and define the new contours of our collective destiny. We can thus draw from our shared river, the United Nations, the resources that will enable us to build, with hope and confidence, a better world for everyone.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, His Excellency Mr. Antonio Martins da Cruz.

Mr. Da Cruz (Portugal): The international agenda was forever changed by the events of 11 September 2001. The challenge created for the United Nations was, and is, the same as that for each of its Members: how best to react to those changes. The international fight against terrorism has thus become a top priority for all of us. It is not only a fight against individuals who conspire to kill innocent people; it is also, in itself, a fight for respect for human life and human dignity, for the values of liberty, tolerance and democracy and for the peaceful solution of conflicts.

The United Nations immediately pledged its Members to the struggle through a swift reaction by the General Assembly and by the Security Council, which stated that the terrorist attacks of 11 September were a threat to international peace and security and which adopted a resolution, sending out a remarkable signal of strength, quickly followed by other international organizations, such as the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As members are aware, Portugal currently holds the chairmanship of the OSCE. We have made the fight against terrorism a priority on the OSCE's agenda. As Chairman-in-Office, I have been working towards a European charter on preventing and fighting terrorism, to be adopted at the ministerial meeting to be held in Portugal next December.

Mr. Maher El Sayed (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.

But the United Nations is in a unique position to coordinate and invigorate the international response to terrorism. We are called upon to demonstrate that a world in which humanity can live free from fear is not only a common aspiration but also an achievable goal. We trust that the Security Council and the General Assembly will live up to their responsibilities in that regard. Failure to do so would seriously compromise the credibility of the Organization.

(*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*)

At the same time that the world faces the new challenge of terrorism, old challenges persist. The Middle East demands a new peace dynamic. The evolution of the Iraqi issue must entail absolute respect for Security Council resolutions and the unconditional return of United Nations inspectors. Indeed, we consider the problem concerning Iraq often to be wrongfully presented: Iraq is a threat to international security, and thus pressure must be exerted on Iraq, not on the United Nations or on one particular country. It is Iraq that is failing to comply with United Nations resolutions. Our goal is to put an end to the threat represented by weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations and its Members cannot and must not continue to tolerate the continuous violation of Security Council resolutions. Thus, the international community must know how to act effectively and must be particularly demanding on this issue.

The Security Council should promptly make a statement on Iraq's lack of compliance with Council resolutions and on its obligations. It is now up to Iraq to seize this opportunity and to cooperate with the United Nations. But, should Iraq persist in not complying fully with the Organization within a time frame to be determined, the international community should not exclude any alternative or option.

On the other hand, two success stories from the past year deserve a special reference. First, in Angola, peace was achieved and seems irreversible. Portugal will continue to work with the Angola's Government and political forces towards the full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. The United Nations must contribute to that process. Humanitarian assistance is vital for the consolidation of the peace process. Those steps, along with free elections and a modern economic framework, will surely strengthen peace and democracy in that country.

Secondly, East Timor's proclamation of independence on 20 May represents a success for the people of East Timor, for the United Nations and for those who fought for it. The General Assembly will soon proclaim East Timor a new Member. An independent East Timor within the United Nations deeply touches the Portuguese people, who have always believed in the rights of East Timor's people and in the justice of their cause. East Timor started from scratch. It is now up to the international community to maintain its support, lest it squander the opportunity to meet the challenges of that new country.

I turn now to a number of other noteworthy matters. As a founding party to the Statute of the International Criminal Court, Portugal believes that the election of a first team of judges will be a crucial step towards the Court's effective functioning and

credibility. That institution and its regular functioning must become a fixture of the international scene.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) underlines the preoccupation of African countries with the values of democracy and human rights, as well as sustainable economic development and the continent's integration into economic globalization. Bearing such concerns in mind, Portugal will organize the next conference between the European Union and Africa, to be held in April 2003. Africa is a priority for us. Therefore, we support initiatives to energize the development policies and economies of that forgotten continent.

Finally, we welcome Switzerland's accession to membership of the United Nations. The presence of the Swiss Confederation will certainly benefit United Nations action.

(*spoke in English*)

The way in which the world embraces the new challenges it faces will be the best indication that the events of one year ago resulted in a triumph for the international community. A safer world is founded on secure countries representing all their people and living in peace. That is how terrorism will eventually be defeated, and out of that the new international order should gradually emerge.

Security can no longer be conceived in exclusively military terms or solely in terms of territorial defence. Several factors must be taken into consideration: the widespread development of weapons of mass destruction; the proliferation of other threats, such as environmental degradation, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, famine and migration, which transcend State borders; and factors affecting the ability of many States to face the challenge of globalization. Thus, no nation, however powerful, is self-sufficient; not even the greatest of countries can do everything on its own. Multilateral cooperation is the key to the future. One of the basic goals of the United Nations should be to implement such cooperation in a practical and consistent manner.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Władzimierz Cimoszewicz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland.

Mr. Cimoszewicz (Poland): I convey my congratulations to Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of this body. I should also like to express once again to Secretary-General Kofi Annan my highest appreciation and to assure him of my support.

It is with satisfaction that Poland welcomes in our midst the newest Member of the United Nations, Switzerland, and looks forward to welcoming soon the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Wisława Szymborska, the Polish poet and Nobel Prize winner, wrote the following words dedicated to the victims of 11 September:

> "They plunged down from heights ablaze ...
> For them, I can do but two things — depict their flight and leave the last sentence unfinished ..."

I believe that every one of us travelling to this brave city shared similar thoughts. All of us must have asked ourselves what is being expected of us, where we are today and what obligations we are to fulfil to ensure that such horror never happens again. No doubt, 11 September was a wake-up call for all of us. It may have not changed the world, but it certainly has fundamentally changed the way we perceive it. History has yet again given us the responsibility to face the challenge and to leave a better and safer world for future generations. But then, after all, is that not what we are really here for?

Many of my colleague representatives touched upon that issue in recent days. The messages delivered here just four days ago by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and President George W. Bush are especially significant. In that regard, we also share the opinions expressed by a number of other speakers, in particular by the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, speaking in his capacity as the President of the European Union.

Today the United Nations stands at a crossroads, facing a choice that needs to be made. Either we will find internal strength to stand up to the challenge and prove that the United Nations is more than a mere discussion forum or we will lose credibility forever. Once again, as was the case at the inception of the Organization over half a century ago, we must take the issue of security seriously, especially as terrorism has given it a new dimension.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Poland will continue to support all efforts aimed at preserving the Organization's unique position. We fully agree with what the Secretary-General said, that we can only succeed if we make full use of multilateral

institutions. We share the position of President Bush that the United Nations must be effective and successful and that its resolutions must be enforced. We are convinced that the Security Council must find enough strength in the nearest future to set the course for a decision-making process in the United Nations aimed at concrete action. This time, we are left with a very small margin. This is a test that international community has to pass. Failure would undermine both the integrity of the United Nations and the security of the whole world.

I think the most appropriate motto for my further reflections on the future of the United Nations is contained in the Secretary-General's millennium report. He wrote that

> "If the international community were to create a new United Nations tomorrow, its make-up would surely be different from the one we have." (*A/54/2000, para. 352*)

It would be highly unfortunate if the millennium report, and especially its conclusions relating to the role of the United Nations and the reform of the Organization, were to fade into oblivion. Only the United Nations, given its exceptional legitimacy stemming from the universal character of both its membership and its mandate can — and, indeed, ought to — rise to the challenges posed to the international community. But for that to happen its prerogatives, rules and instruments would have to be geared to the needs of today and the threats of tomorrow.

We should consider the elaboration of a document that would be neither a draft revision of the Charter nor a supplement to it. What I would like to suggest is that we make an attempt to acknowledge the new reality and try a new road. I am by no means being original or precedent-setting in calling for this. The Atlantic Charter and the New Atlantic Charter, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe have all been there before. In other words, adapting an organization's mandate to make it relevant to new needs without actually revising its founding act has already been tested.

There is a widespread sense that some provisions of the United Nations Charter having actually become a dead letter. That applies to both the substance of those provisions and to the procedural solutions they offer. Some of the Charter's provisions and organs have completed the tasks assigned to them and are now redundant. But the Organization does need new mechanisms to run peacekeeping operations. It is impossible to comprehend why we still keep in place clauses on "enemy States" while the United Nations has no regulations to properly address the problems related to its humanitarian interventions. There is a general acceptance of the need for clear lines to be drawn to mark new areas of responsibility for a number of important United Nations organs.

The values, purposes and principles of the United Nations, enshrined in the Preamble and in Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter, have not lost their relevance. They have stood the test of time. A document that could be considered as a new act for the United Nations at the dawn of the twenty-first century could give fresh impetus to the principles, organs and mechanisms of the United Nations and make them more responsive to the needs and challenges that today dominate the life of the international community. Let me point out four groups of problems that should be tackled, starting with new threats to security.

The Charter makes reference to threats traditionally raised by States. The Charter's provisions concerning the Security Council and its composition and instruments, as well as the other Chapters dealing with security, are now insufficient. That fact is borne out by the numerous developments of recent years, including the attack of 11 September and its consequences.

Then there is acute poverty, which is evident in many parts of the world; chronic underdevelopment; pandemic disease; lack of education and medical care; and deepening differences in living conditions and developmental standards. All of these are unacceptable politically and morally.

Human rights, the rule of law, democracy, good governance and civil society make up the third group of problems that I have been thinking about.

The fourth group is made up of themes related to sustainable development. The focus on the protection of the human habitat, which is indispensable to the survival of the human race, and on the common heritage of mankind.

Moreover, existing United Nations principles must be expanded, or new ones developed, in order for the Organization to pursue its actions along the following three dimensions, namely, in manifestations

of multilateralism in the work of the United Nations while reconciling broad representation and collectivism with effectiveness; in the subsidiarity of the Organization's work to better utilize the means and resources available to Member States, specifically with regard to United Nations regional arrangements; and, finally, in getting non-governmental entities, including private capital, involved in United Nations work in a way that will not detract from the democratic nature of the Organization nor erode its governmental character and efficiency while increasing its resources and effectiveness.

I dare say that no country, group of countries or regional agencies meeting the Organization's criteria would be capable of taking up the totality of problems such an undertaking would have to address. Subject to appropriate consultations involving the membership of the Organization and the Secretary-General, we might wish to establish a "group of sages" made up of outstanding personalities. The group would draft an appropriate document that would then be reviewed and approved by Member States. That document should be politically binding in nature, which would make it complementary to the legal grounding contained in the Charter and provide a platform for the United Nations actions over the coming decades.

We should think about the future and work on its foundations, but without losing sight of present-day achievements. The enactment of the Statute of the International Criminal Court is one such achievement. It turns a new page in both international relations and international law. It is Poland's desire for the treaty establishing the Court to become one of the most universal documents of its kind. We trust that the existing divergences between respective stands and views can be resolved through dialogue and compromise, according to international law. We have to act so as not to disappoint the hopes and expectations that the international community has placed in the Court.

A year ago, the whole world joined together in an unprecedented demonstration of solidarity. Today we are more aware of the source and the character of the threat. We are also more capable of dealing with it. Poland has joined the ongoing anti-terrorist operation. Our soldiers are now deployed in Afghanistan, alongside their colleagues from other countries, and are doing their utmost to strengthen security there and to help raise the country from the rubble and ruin inflicted upon it by two decades of war and internal strife.

For us that is natural, but we cannot avoid asking ourselves the question of whether we are any closer today to fulfilling the ideals towards which we set sail half a century ago. We now have another chance to revitalize solidarity and work together for values that are priceless both to us and to generations to come. Let us all create an axis of good that will bring back the proper meaning to the term we are so proud of, the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia.

Mr. Erdenechuluun (Mongolia): Mongolia welcomes wholeheartedly the newest member of the United Nations family, Switzerland, a country that has a long-standing association with the United Nations as its second largest headquarters. We also look forward to welcoming East Timor, the youngest member of the international community.

A little over two years ago, at the historic Millennium Summit held here in New York, our leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and pledged their unequivocal support for a more efficient and reinvigorated United Nations so that this unique world body can effectively address the formidable challenges of the new century and, indeed, of the new millennium.

Some important steps have been taken to reform and adapt the United Nations to the evolving international realities, with a view to ensuring its efficient functioning in the era of globalization. However, the reform process, particularly that of the Security Council, tends to slow down and hence, there is an apparent need to take proper measures to speed it up. Mongolia stands for a just and equitable enlargement of the Security Council and for democratization of international relations by enhancing the openness and transparency of the work of the Security Council and by increasing the role of the General Assembly, as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations.

The United Nations has been instrumental in intensifying the efforts of the world community aimed at developing a collective response to global terror, at helping reach national reconciliation and build a peace

process in post-Taliban Afghanistan, at assisting in the emergence of an independent East Timor and at helping to bring about the entry into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. It has also been indispensable in paving the way towards reaching consensus at Doha, Monterrey, Rome and Johannesburg, which were important steps along the road towards meeting the millennium development goals.

Yet, much still remains to be done to sustain the progress achieved, to honour commitments made and to redress setbacks to international peace and security in today's volatile environment. The tragic events of 11 September have shown that there is a need for a fundamental change in our perception of security. More weapons and allocating more resources to the military do not necessarily translate into increased security. Security can no longer be confined to the boundaries of a single State, or even a group of States. This indivisibility of global security makes multilateralism the order of the day. To paraphrase the Secretary-General, let us all recognize that today global security is our national security. Let us also recognize that ensuring the security of the human person must be at the heart of our concerns. The concept of human security is increasingly making a case for itself.

The outgoing year has witnessed serious threats to international peace and security. The remnants of those threats continue to pose a menace to the international community.

In Afghanistan, the United Nations is helping the Afghan Government in its efforts towards rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Those objectives can only be achieved if the Government of President Karzai exercises effective control over the entire country.

The prevailing explosive situation in the Middle East is of special concern. It calls for sustained efforts aimed at reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the problem. Mongolia supports the efforts of the Quartet and of the countries of the region to find ways to peacefully settle that long-festering conflict. The convening of an international conference to consider effective measures for such a solution will undoubtedly be a step in the right direction.

My Government shares the view that the Security Council should make every effort to impress upon Iraq the need to comply with Council resolutions and, as a first step, accept weapons inspections unconditionally. The world community cannot afford to sit idle in the face of open defiance of mandatory resolutions of the Security Council.

The world has not only been threatened by the escalation of tension in various regions, it has also been threatened by increasing human insecurity resulting from the failure of the international community to deliver on the crucial commitments it made during the 1990s. In his address to the General Assembly last year, my Prime Minister appealed to the international community to make the first decade of this new century a decade of implementation and cooperation towards a safer and better world, as we cannot afford to fail during yet another decade if we are serious about ensuring human security. We cannot afford to fail to implement the far-reaching, yet achievable, targets set by our leaders at the Millennium Summit. That is all the more so as our failure or inaction could be used as justification for deadly acts by those who threaten peace, stability and social progress.

That appeal is even more relevant today. The 2002 *Human Development Report* indicates that if current trends continue, a significant portion of the world's States are unlikely to achieve the millennium development goals, including the overarching target of halving extreme poverty by 2015. If global progress continues at such a snail's pace, it will take more than 130 years to rid the world of hunger.

A legitimate question arises, namely what has to be done by the international community to redress that situation? The short answer could be to display genuine solidarity and for all to share responsibility in honouring the commitments made without delay. But the people of our countries, in whose service this world body was conceived, have waited through dozens of conferences and their five-year reviews while the implementation of agreed targets continues to be stalled at levels far from those desired. Under these circumstances it is our considered view that it is incumbent upon the international community to closely look into the existing imbalance in global governance, especially in the economic and social areas.

Mongolia believes that with its impartiality and universal legitimacy, as well as its Charter-based prevalence over any other international agreement, the United Nations is uniquely placed to provide for global

governance in economic and social areas while allowing equal participation by the South in the decision-making process. We therefore believe that it is high time to engage in an earnest dialogue about an entirely new framework of development cooperation that is more responsive to the emerging imperatives of global human security.

As we see it, the new development partnership between the North and the South should be based on justice, not on charity; on equitable sharing of global market opportunities, not on protectionism or aid; and on mutual cooperation, not on unilateral conditionality or confrontation. The Economic and Social Council has an important role to play in initiating and promoting that dialogue, in line with the objectives set forth in Article 55 of the Charter.

Furthermore, transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money-laundering, the illegal arms trade, the spread of HIV/AIDS, global pollution, climate change and other negative phenomena pose a persistent threat to rich and poor nations alike. They call for a new cooperation framework to be developed to defend the new frontiers of global human security and to fill critical gaps in the existing system of global economic governance. At a time of increasing globalization, the formidable challenges facing the human family require an adequate response. It would be a fallacy to replace fundamental reform with a piecemeal approach or marginal remedies. If there is strong political will on the part of the international community to collectively stand up to these challenges, then why not engage in a common quest for an adequate architecture of global governance for human security?

Mongolia expresses its firm support for the creation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is a comprehensive blueprint and a broad vision for Africa's future economic and social development. It is Africa-owned, and based on the lessons of the past decade. We hope that that important initiative will receive the generous support of the international community with a view to attaining the ambitious goal of an African renaissance.

My own country, Mongolia, which has the inherent development handicap of being landlocked and is very susceptible to natural disasters, is not immune from many of the threats to human security to which I have referred. In addition to the persistence of poverty and unemployment and the disruption of basic health and social services, human security in Mongolia is affected by the increasing recurrence of natural disasters and the spread of environmental degradation, including desertification, water and air pollution. Efforts to improve human security are further hampered by extremely low population density, a weak infrastructure and a small, non-diversified economy that is very vulnerable to external shocks.

Capitalizing on its valuable assets of well-educated human resources and accumulated experience of reform in both the political and economic areas, Mongolia is endeavouring to ensure the human security of its people through both national action and international cooperation.

Nationally, my Government launched, in late 2000, the Good Governance for Human Security programme, aimed at improving the capacity to formulate and implement policies to ensure human security. Thus far, we have succeeded in securing a national commitment to its implementation on the part of all the branches of the State; institutionalizing the programme's implementation mechanism; and laying the groundwork for the greater involvement and participation of civil society, the private sector and academia.

At the international level, Mongolia, for its part, has been endeavouring to contribute, where it can, to the common efforts of the world community, while drawing attention to issues of particular concern to it.

As a landlocked developing country, Mongolia attaches particular importance to enhancing international cooperation to ease the inherent development challenges faced by that group of countries. In this regard, my delegation looks forward to the forthcoming International Ministerial Meeting on transit transport cooperation, to be held in 2003 in Kazakhstan.

In recognition of the crucial role of education in ensuring sustainable human development and human security, my delegation is pleased to note that at its last session the General Assembly proclaimed — as the result of an initiative of Mongolia — the 10-year period starting 1 January 2003 as the United Nations Literacy Decade. We look forward to the unanimous adoption of the Decade's draft plan of action at this session of the General Assembly.

Ten years ago Mongolia declared itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Since then, it has adopted national legislation defining and regulating that status. At present, consultations are under way with our immediate neighbours and other States concerned on ways to institutionalize our status internationally. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the five nuclear-weapon States for their cooperation, and United Nations bodies for their invaluable support in translating the initiative into reality.

In recent years, Mongolia has been actively engaged in establishing and strengthening institutions and processes of democratic governance, protecting human rights and promoting democratic consolidation. Its efforts have been similar to those of many other States that are promoting democratic values and developing democratic institutions. We believe that the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held from 18 to 20 June 2003 in Mongolia, could provide an important opportunity for the international community to exchange information and experience and search for practical ways of promoting and strengthening democracy nationally and internationally. I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's heartfelt gratitude to this body for graciously accepting our offer and setting in motion the preparations for the Conference. The main theme of the Conference is democracy, good governance and civil society.

Mongolia believes that the International Criminal Court, established on 1 July, could be instrumental in ending impunity and upholding justice, deterring future crimes and further strengthening international criminal law. As one of its founding members, Mongolia also believes that the widest possible accession to the Court will broaden the geographic scope of the Court's jurisdiction and thus end impunity for acts of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Court's jurisdiction should eventually cover the crime of aggression.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my Government's resolve to work with other Member States towards making our world Organization better equipped to meet the global challenges lying ahead.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vilayat Guliyev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Guliyev (Azerbaijan): I should like first of all to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, and to express gratitude to Mr. Han Seung-soo for his efforts as President during the fifty-sixth session.

I also have pleasure in congratulating Switzerland on becoming a Member State.

The United Nations, which is called upon to play a leading role in ensuring international peace and security, is currently undertaking a serious examination of its ability to unify the efforts of Member States and to organize efficient international cooperation in confronting threats and risks that have a global dimension.

The tragic events that occurred in New York one year ago made all of us look at the world in a new way and recognize the global interdependence of the challenges of the new era. We must recognize that the world itself has enabled the monster of terrorism to develop by ignoring problems, turning a blind eye to violations of the norms of international law, tolerating aggression and failing to respond to threats caused by the illegal actions of some States, by separatism and by the proliferation of weapons. It is necessary for us to learn lessons from the mistakes made and to launch a broad offensive against terrorism on the basis of common approaches.

Respect for a universal approach that does not permit inconsistency, selectiveness or double standards is an indispensable condition for global solidarity in confronting terrorism. The legal basis of such an approach must be set out in a comprehensive convention to combat terrorism. No political, social, ideological, religious or other reason can justify any of the acts, methods or practices of terrorism. Effectively counteracting terrorism and achieving its total eradication demand the use of the broadest, most complex approach, taking into consideration the various aspects of the problem and its root causes.

It is obvious that terrorist groups recruit new members and flourish most easily in an environment characterized by economic and social degradation, armed conflict, poverty, illiteracy and self-isolation. The necessary resources should be mobilized to open up new programmes of assistance to the developing and less developed countries, and to expand existing programmes. The implementation of United Nations

decisions on assistance for the sustainable development and relaunching of economic growth in those countries plays a major role. We need to take special note of the need to render urgent international assistance to Afghanistan.

Another important aspect in the eradication of terrorism is the avoidance of inter-civilizational tensions and the creation of a spirit of mutual respect among religions and cultures. We support the trend towards continuing and deepening the dialogue among civilizations, and we stress its multifaceted nature. We believe that the implementation of programmes in the fields of education, information and cultural dialogue among civilizations will facilitate the creation of relations of mutual understanding and trust, which are so greatly needed in order to resolve the common problems faced by both the West and the East.

In this context, I would like to stress in particular the importance of the international conference initiated by Azerbaijan on "The Role of Religion and Belief in a Democratic Society: Searching for Ways to Combat Terrorism and Extremism", to be held in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on 10 and 11 October 2002 in Baku.

In the combat against international terrorism, priority should be given to addressing militant nationalism and aggressive separatism. Very often terrorist groups of separatists and nationalists of various kinds maintain close ties among each other and are directly sponsored by States. The fight against terrorism represents an extremely complex problem in the so-called uncontrolled territories that have emerged as a result of armed separatism and foreign aggression.

For 10 years now such an uncontrolled zone has existed in that part of the territory of Azerbaijan occupied by Armenia. Elevating the ideology of aggressive nationalism, terrorism and territorial claims to neighbours to the rank of State policy, the Republic of Armenia, through direct interference in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan, formed an armed separatist terrorist group within the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This was followed by open, armed aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan.

Armenia, which perpetrated ethnic cleansing against the Azerbaijani people in their own territory in 1987 and 1988, in 1992 and 1993 occupied the entire Nagorno-Karabakh region, expelling 60,000 native Azerbaijani people. It has also occupied the territories of another seven regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, thus bringing the total number of Azerbaijani refugees to 1 million. Armenia now intends to consolidate the results of its aggression and ethnic cleansing and to tear away the Nagorno-Karabakh region from Azerbaijan.

Armenia has tried to camouflage its annexationist policy by appealing to the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination. However, according to international law, this principle can be realized only in a peaceful way and in accordance with the principle of territorial integrity. The right to self-determination does not imply the unilateral right of secession and should not lead to the disintegration of a sovereign and independent State.

Furthermore, the Armenians residing in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan can in no way be regarded as independent subjects with the right to self-determination.

The assertion of the Armenian side that the Nagorno-Karabakh region has never belonged to Azerbaijan is equally groundless, as is its reference to international law. Aside from the fact that appealing to history in the context of the settlement of inter-State conflicts is wrong, extremely dangerous and calls into question the universality of the norms of the international law, it must be noted that these statements by Armenia are refuted by numerous historical official documents.

Armenia, which often refers to the League of Nations to justify its territorial claims, must remember that, in its official documents, the League of Nations expressed doubt as to the existence of a stable government capable of representing Armenia and, what is most important, certified Armenia's lack of clearly defined borders.

The decisions of Armenia's Parliament on the reunification of the Nagorno-Karabakh region with Armenia and on the non-recognition of any international document which mentions this region as an integral part of Azerbaijan are illegal. Likewise, the decisions taken by the illegal separatist regime in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the so-called referendums and elections it held in a situation of war and the forcible expulsion of the entire Azerbaijani population cannot have any international legal validity.

Furthermore, Armenia itself has violated the right of the Azerbaijani people to self-determination. In accordance with the universally recognized international legal doctrine *uti possidetis juris*, former Union republics are recognized as new independent States within borders previously existing within the federations. These were the exact borders within which the United Nations recognized Azerbaijan in March 1992, when it accepted our country as a fully fledged Member of this universal Organization.

In 1993 the Security Council adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. These resolutions were adopted following each new stage of Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan. The Council unambiguously supported the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan, confirmed its recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as an integral part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and resolutely demanded the immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the creation of conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons. However, these demands by the Security Council have so far not been implemented.

Those resolutions also contained a request to the Secretary-General, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the Chairman of the Minsk Group, to submit, in implementing the mandate for the settlement of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, reports on the situation in the region to the Security Council. The last decision stressed the request to provide information on the process of the implementation of all four resolutions. Regrettably, this request still remains on paper only. Such a state of affairs cannot be beneficial for us; it leads to the "discharging" of the settlement process and, eventually, to a freezing of the situation at a dangerous point of fait accompli of the occupation. The non-implementation of Security Council resolutions undermines its authority as well as people's belief in justice and in the possibility of a peaceful political settlement.

As is well known, in the annual resolution of the General Assembly on cooperation with the OSCE, the United Nations expresses its support for the efforts of the regional organization and its Minsk Group, which mediates the settlement of the conflict in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

How can we evaluate these decade-long efforts, which have been under way since the establishment of the Minsk Group at the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) Ministerial Council held in Helsinki in March 1992? While at the early stages of the mediation the Minsk Group was putting forward proposals on the elimination of the consequences of the conflict, its present activities can be characterized as following a "wait-and-see" policy against the background of the negotiations, until the victimized party accepts the conditions of the aggressor.

Such a position on the part of the mediators can be regarded only as passive support for Armenia's fait-accompli policy, which is unacceptable to us.

Azerbaijan, which remains committed to a peaceful settlement of the conflict and to interaction with the OSCE and its Minsk Group, sees an urgent need for a new and resolute intervention by the Security Council, which so far has not used its potential effectively to contribute to the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

The current situation is explosive. Yes, the ceasefire has been observed for eight years and mediation activity is being maintained, but a real peaceful settlement of the conflict has not occurred. Azerbaijan will never agree to the legalization of territorial seizures. Azerbaijan will never accept the loss of a single inch of its territory and preserves its right to undertake all the necessary measures stipulated by the United Nations Charter to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We call upon the Security Council to review the existing situation, to make Armenia immediately withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and to engage in negotiations on defining the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region within Azerbaijan on the basis of the norms and principles of international law. We call upon the Republic of Armenia to heed the voice of reason and abandon its pernicious policy of territorial claims against Azerbaijan. The continuation of the occupation of Azerbaijani lands and confrontation with Azerbaijan will yield the Armenian people nothing but misfortune and suffering.

The conflict not only substantially undermines security in the South Caucasus region, but also constitutes a major obstacle to establishing bilateral and regional cooperation. This cooperation would have

provided benefits to all States in the region and played a crucial role in strengthening their positions and prestige in the international arena.

Making use of its natural resources and favourable geographic location, Azerbaijan contributes immensely to the development of the South Caucasus region and in fact plays the role of engine in its integration into the world system. According to data released last year by the Statistical Office of the European Communities, 52 per cent of the gross product of the countries of the South Caucasus was produced in Azerbaijan. A significant event, reaching far beyond the South Caucasus borders, will take place in three days: the ground-breaking ceremony of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the construction of which will give rise to a vast investment flow into the economies of the countries.

Armenia, by its actions against Azerbaijan, has isolated itself from participation in this kind of economic project. Yes, at every level Armenia declares its willingness to cooperate with Azerbaijan, but in Armenia's understanding, Azerbaijan must turn a blind eye to the occupation of its territories and establish economic relations with Armenia. I think members will agree that hardly anyone could accept such a suggestion, which in fact would represent appeasement of the aggressor.

Seeking ways out of the present situation and to unblock the process of conflict resolution, Azerbaijan, demonstrating a constructive approach, has proposed to Armenia that it withdraw its occupation forces from the four occupied districts and that it subsequently restore the main-line railway interlinking Azerbaijan, Armenia and other countries of the region. Conceived as a gesture of goodwill, this unique package of measures for the partial elimination of the consequences of the conflict and for the revitalization of cooperation would significantly improve the negotiating environment and public opinion in both countries. This proposal of Azerbaijan, promising benefits for both parties to the conflict and other countries of the region, enjoyed the widest support of the OSCE and its Minsk Group, the European Union and the Council of Europe. However, when it came to taking practical measures, Armenia, diligently demonstrating its commitment to peace and cooperation, rejected this step towards confidence.

The situation of "no peace, no war" in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict is a time bomb and a cause of despair for the people, first and foremost refugees and internally displaced persons, who have been violently deprived of their homes, left to bear the most heavy burden of the consequences of the aggression and are now losing patience and hope for the restoration of their legal rights. As a result of Armenia's aggressive actions, Azerbaijan currently gives shelter to more than 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons. In years past, great work has been carried out to solve the refugees' problems, with the assistance of international humanitarian organizations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) above all.

At present, we feel that the urgent necessities for targeted assistance are to provide medical institutions with the necessary medical preparations and equipment, to implement agricultural programmes, to create jobs and to develop small-scale entrepreneurship. We call upon UNHCR, other international institutions and donor States to respond to our problems and to mobilize resources for facilitating their solution on the required scale.

Let me briefly touch upon the issue of United Nations reform aimed at increasing the effectiveness and practical results of the Organization's activities. We have to determine a number of possible reforms, among which the expansion of the Security Council deserves particular mention. I would like to express the hope that the broadest possible consensus on every aspect of this issue will be reached. Greater balance within the Council could have been provided with the inclusion in its composition of influential developing countries along with the developed ones. An increase in representation within one of the United Nations leading bodies — within rational limits — would have reflected the realities of the time and the consideration of broader interests in the solution of crucial issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security. With regard to the reform, we would wish more democracy, action and compatibility with the challenges of change.

I would like to believe that the reforms will enable the United Nations to confirm its role as a universal Organization capable of maintaining international peace and security, preventing and resolving regional conflicts, and confronting global threats and risks under the new conditions of globalization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Philip Sealy.

Mr. Sealy (Trinidad and Tobago): Please allow me to preface my indication by indicating to this Assembly the regret of my Head of Government and of my Foreign Minister, who could not join us on this occasion due to pressing domestic electoral commitments.

I would wish, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to extend to Mr. Kavan our most sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. We are convinced that, under his enlightened guidance, we will address with determination and courage the issues that confront the international community.

We would also wish to express at this time our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, President of the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, for the courageous leadership which he displayed in bringing that session to a successful conclusion under difficult and trying circumstances.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, we wish to place on record our appreciation for his relentless commitment to the cause of peace, security and development and for his tireless efforts in achieving the goals of this world body.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago extends a warm welcome to Switzerland on its becoming the 190th State Member of the United Nations and looks forward in the not-too-distant future to the admission of Timor-Leste into our United Nations family.

The maintenance of international peace and security, together with the promotion of economic progress and the achievement of social justice for peoples all over the globe, are the pillars on which this Organization was founded more than half a century ago. These goals remain as valid today, and even more so, as when our founding fathers created this Organization.

As Governments, therefore, and as Member States of the United Nations, it is incumbent upon us, the international community as a whole, to reaffirm constantly, by word and deed, our faith in and commitment to the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations, particularly in the area of international peace and security. In this field, the Security Council, charged as it is with primary responsibility under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, must be allowed to fully play its fundamental role, as it did in confronting the challenge posed to the international community by the terrorist acts committed in this very city on 11 September 2001.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to working with the Counter-Terrorism Committee established by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) in order to do our part to eradicate the scourge of terrorism from our world.

On 31 August 1962, some 40 years ago, Trinidad and Tobago became an independent State and immediately thereafter joined this universal body. We in Trinidad and Tobago recognize and appreciate the role that the United Nations has played in promoting fundamental human rights and freedoms, the international rule of law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the right to self-determination and the sovereign equality of States. Without proper observance by all States, large and small, of these basic principles, the world would most certainly have been a more challenging place for us all.

It is in that context that Trinidad and Tobago views with increasing concern the continued absence of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is clear that peace will continue to elude that region unless all parties concerned demonstrate unequivocally the will to collaborate with a view to achieving the vision set out in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002).

The maintenance of international peace and security is a sine qua non for the achievement of our economic and social development goals. It is against this background that Trinidad and Tobago, as a small State and as a developing country, supports all efforts made through the international conferences and special sessions held within the framework of the United Nations to address the international social agenda in pursuit of integral human development worldwide. Some of those include the special session on HIV/AIDS, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the special session on children and the just concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development, all of which have not only recognized the concerns of the more vulnerable groups within our societies, but have

also identified various policy alternatives through which those concerns can be addressed.

There can, in fact, be no meaningful development if significant segments of our populations are allowed to remain in a state of increasing vulnerability. As a result, Trinidad and Tobago participated fully in the work of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the special session on children and the special session on HIV/AIDS.

It is our hope that the adoption of the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, as well as the Declaration and Plan of Action emerging from this year's special session on children, will serve as the basis for the development of policies at the national level to deal with the problems faced by these two vulnerable groups in our societies. For its part, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has recently completed a draft national policy on ageing that will address the principal concerns of our ageing population.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to hamper the economic and social development of our Caribbean region, affecting as it does the most economically active and productive segments of our societies. My Government has sought to incorporate this issue as a matter of priority into its national strategic planning process. It is virtually impossible, however, for any one country unilaterally to deal effectively with this public health issue. For that reason, Trinidad and Tobago is committed to participating fully in all relevant regional and international initiatives.

In that regard, member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) were among the first to translate the global commitments undertaken at the special session on HIV/AIDS into regional targets when, in 2001, our Governments adopted the Nassau Declaration on Health, which identified priorities for action and partnership in addressing this global health issue. However, assistance is urgently needed to boost these national and regional initiatives. We consider timely the launching of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. We hope that through this Fund, Governments will be further empowered in their efforts to implement measures aimed at the eventual eradication of these diseases.

As a country which falls within the category of small island developing States, Trinidad and Tobago feels obliged to make reference to the tendency in the international community to underestimate the phenomenon of vulnerability, both as a condition of size and stage of development. Small island developing economies are by definition vulnerable, and in a global village, where negative occurrences in one sphere can have a ripple effect in others, the implications for us all are as real as they are apparent. The lack of inherent capacity, technology and technical know-how limits the adaptive capacity of small island developing States to cope with the challenges that they face, including global environmental problems such as climate change, biodiversity and land degradation.

As we engage in efforts at the international level to achieve environmentally sound economic development, Trinidad and Tobago remains cautious in the light of the dismal record regarding the implementation of commitments made at the Rio Summit, 10 years ago. That Summit concluded with the signing of two conventions, one on climate change and the other on biodiversity, together with the adoption of Agenda 21.

It continues to concern us that emissions of greenhouse gases have increased worldwide and that climate change is occurring at a faster rate than previously estimated, especially since small island developing States are disproportionately vulnerable to the impact of climate change, while being responsible for a minuscule proportion of such emissions. Trinidad and Tobago therefore urges that decisive action be taken to ensure that the Kyoto Protocol comes into force as early as possible, as that is the only existing international instrument that addresses these problems. We therefore welcome the political commitment given by the leaders of some key industrialized countries to ratify this Protocol in the near future.

It would seem, however, that progress under Agenda 21 has been limited primarily by lack of funding and capacity, which has resulted in the widening of the gap between the attainment of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. Trinidad and Tobago is therefore pleased that the recently concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, agreed to specific targets in areas such as water and sanitation, health, biodiversity loss, restoration of depleted fish stocks and chemicals.

The fact that the Johannesburg Summit achieved a greater synthesis and integration of the three pillars

of sustainable development, namely, the social, economic and environmental, is also a welcome development. The enormous challenges that these issues collectively pose provide a profound insight into the magnitude of the task faced by developing countries in their quest for sustainable development. The real test of whether Johannesburg was a success will, however, come in the months and years ahead as we seek to implement the commitments made by Member States.

We must build on the momentum of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and ensure that our future course of action guarantees the outcomes envisaged in the Plan of Implementation and the Political Declaration emanating from that Summit. It is in this respect that Trinidad and Tobago would therefore expect that a priority of this Assembly would be a decision to convene an international conference in 2004 to review the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and more so in view of the growing recognition by the international community of the special and vulnerable situation of these countries.

Additionally, the Assembly may wish to note that some of these smaller economies continue to be faced by circumstances such as onerous debt-servicing schedules, lack of access to new finance and obstacles in penetrating non-traditional markets, which negate all their efforts aimed at economic advancement.

It is for this reason that Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to the early implementation of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and other United Nations initiatives aimed at alleviating the economic burdens faced by many low- and middle-income countries. These countries are being asked to service debts and at the same time to fulfil their commitments to the Millennium development agenda. In this regard, we welcome the recent appointment by the Secretary-General of a High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to working with the High Representative to ensure the effective discharge of his mandate, particularly as it relates to small island developing States.

Another noble attempt conceptualized within the United Nations framework was the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey earlier this year. Trinidad and Tobago is heartened by the outcome of that Conference that defined the necessary actions for addressing some of the more pressing problems faced by developing countries in the areas of mobilizing domestic and international resources for development, international trade, financial and technical cooperation for development and external debt. My delegation therefore urges this Assembly to endorse the Monterrey Consensus as adopted by that Conference.

At the regional level, Trinidad and Tobago is engaged in joint efforts with its Caribbean Community (CARICOM) partners to assume responsibility for the management of our developing economies. At a Special CARICOM Summit held last month, CARICOM leaders mandated that a regional stabilization fund should be created within the framework of a long-term economic transformation programme. The purpose of the fund will be to provide regional economies with the necessary financial resources to respond to current and long-term economic difficulties. This regional financial cooperation programme is intended to augment budgetary resources available to member States of the Community from both domestic sources and multilateral institutions.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the international rule of law and to justice for all. Our role in the reintroduction into the international agenda of the idea of the creation of a permanent International Criminal Court in 1989 is well known. And, since that time, Trinidad and Tobago has not ceased to promote support for that Court, both regionally and internationally. It continues to be the hope of my Government that at the Review Conference of 2009, the crimes of drug-trafficking and terrorism will also be included within the jurisdiction of the Court.

It is noteworthy that many States regard the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as the single most important international instrument since the adoption of the United Nations Charter. The successful conclusion of the first meeting of the Assembly of States Parties to the Statute last week was a positive step towards the operational phase of the Court, which now stands as a permanent warning to would-be perpetrators of the crimes within its jurisdiction that impunity will no longer be tolerated by the international community and that justice will be

assured to their victims. In the election of judges to that Court, Trinidad and Tobago would, as a small State, consider it an honour to have one of its nationals elected in order to continue its contribution to the cause of international criminal justice.

But justice for all victims of the most heinous crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity will only be assured when this most recently created International Criminal Tribunal gains the widest possible acceptance. We therefore encourage those States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Statute.

In order to ensure that the Court will truly achieve the goals for which it was established, the States Parties must stand together in their efforts to preserve the integrity of the Statute to which they have committed themselves and must, with one accord, resist any attempts to undermine the effectiveness and independence of the Court.

In conclusion, the issues which I have raised in this forum today point to the need for the globalization of genuine commitment to the resolution of the problems that currently confront our international community. What is required therefore is a greater sense of shared commitment to the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations in the face of new and ominous threats to global peace and security; to the vision of a world free from poverty, hunger and disease; and to an international organization fully charged by its Member States with the political will to tackle frontally all the challenges that pose threats to the very survival of mankind. Trinidad and Tobago, forty years after joining the United Nations, renews before the Assembly its firm commitment to abide fully by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and to make its contribution to the economic and social progress of peoples the world over.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

United Nations A/57/PV.9

General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Sunday, 15 September 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Louis Michel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Some 50 years ago my predecessor Paul-Henri Spaak said before the Assembly, in a phrase that stands out in our minds, "We are afraid". At that time, totalitarianism threatened democratic freedoms and our open society was in danger. Fortunately, political and diplomatic dialogue gradually won out over confrontation, mutual threats and force. The advent of a freer world, more united and more respectful of everyone is finally within our grasp. After September 2001, all democratic forces throughout the world felt a moment of fear, terror, confusion and horror at the barbaric violence that smashed their strongest beliefs into pieces. That irrational hatred threatened the same democratic values, fundamental freedoms and humanistic world outlook.

The free world came together with a sense of solidarity, compassion and survival. A coalition against that vile crime stood side by side with the people of the United States. We felt it was our duty; we felt that their suffering was our suffering and that their cause was also our cause. We could not permit there to be any doubt in the minds of the enemies of our shared values; we could not leave any scope for those who sought to break the promise of a world of justice, progress and peace.

Today we must move beyond fear. Our response must be guided by clear-minded analysis and rational action. The enemy is faceless but is not everywhere. We all are now constantly vigilant, but must not reach the point of being unable to look one another in the eye without mistrust or suspicion. We are in an infinitely great majority; only an infinitesimal minority is against us. We cannot simply reduce the entire world to a battlefield. We cannot simply make a division between good and evil. To build a wall would be to fall into the trap of those who openly display their hate and intolerance. Instead, more than ever we must realize that the source of wealth and hope in the world is precisely its great diversity and pluralism.

The struggle against terrorism must, of course, be based on effective methods with no room for laxity. I want to make this point very strongly: fighting terrorism must not lead us to distort the nature of democratic tolerant life or respect for the rule of law. Preserving our concept of a pluralist, open and tolerant society must be our goal. We cannot be misled or accept distortions of our firm belief in the fundamental human rights and the rights of peoples. Combating terrorism also means, above all, that we must defend the fundamental rights and legal protections of every man and woman. We have a humanist conviction and we must defend it, because otherwise we would be ceding victory to the terrorists. It would also be a

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mistake to believe that the fight against terrorism can be won by military means alone. Military means are admittedly necessary, but are not themselves enough to put an end to this horrible phenomenon.

There is absolutely nothing that can justify terrorism. No cause can justify terror. I categorically and definitively reject the idea that we have to look to the inequities of the world for the source of this perversion of the mind and soul. In my view, that would mitigate this abominable act. The origin of the attack cannot be found there. However, we also know that misery, injustice, poverty, exclusion and humiliation create fertile ground for extremism, intolerance and hatred to flourish by taking advantage of the hopelessness and suffering of those left behind by a society too quickly satisfied by its clear conscience.

Why should we deny it? As our Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt has said, in less than a year we have focused at least four times on the challenges facing the world: at Doha, Monterrey, Rome and Johannesburg. The elimination of poverty, debt reduction and liberalization of international trade as a factor for development are all questions that have been repeatedly discussed. We all come to the same conclusions. We identify the same causes. I am certain that we all know the solutions that must be applied.

With such unanimity, it should be easy to put an end to inequality. It should be easy to bring together a world which for too long has been cut in two, a world that generates tensions and frustrations. There cannot and should not be a superficial division at the margin of our wealth. We need a loftier conception of cooperation, one that derives not from paternalism but rather from partnership and mutual respect.

Putting an end to inequality and forging a new solidarity is the way to ensure sustainable development for future generations. At each of our summits, the rich world has raised the hopes of the millions of indigent people who are searching for a glimmer of light in the darkness. However, each time, at the end of these grand meetings, when the speeches are over, when those who advocate on behalf of the poor have stopped their ritualistic pleadings, poverty remains in place. One gets the impression that we have offered those who expected so much of us only empty rhetoric and posturing.

The Millennium Goals must become a benchmark for all the work of the United Nations and for that of each of its Member States. We have to translate them into financial tools and into access to markets and technology. At Monterrey, my country pledged to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for development cooperation by 2010. We have offered, furthermore, new initiatives on the debt burden.

I also attach paramount importance to follow-up of the Durban Conference against racism, and to the implementation of the Durban Programme of Action. Combating racism, discrimination and intolerance is absolutely essential for the millions of human beings who have often silently suffered from infringements on their dignity. I stress the historic importance of the agreement on the origins and causes of racism. It forms the basis of a new partnership. Unless we recognize past injustices, we will not have a solid basis for future efforts.

Another challenge that we wish to address is to attain absolute gender equality. This is absolutely essential in a civilization of progress, in which our ideals of democracy and humanism are realized. The Secretary-General and his team, including his Deputy, Louise Fréchette, can count on my country's commitment and support for all the reforms under way. We must revitalize the General Assembly, continue the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, expand the Security Council and carry out organizational reforms. I know that the United Nations will take up these challenges.

The outstanding and far-sighted speech made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan rightly, skilfully and resolutely reminded us what, in the final analysis, is the meaning of the world government and parliament. He made his statement very convincingly and intelligently. We share his view on reshaping our Organization so that it can live up to our ambitions.

My country was at the forefront of combating impunity for the most serious crimes and for the rapid development of a true international criminal justice. That is why we continue to support the internationalization of the Rome Statute, and why we are resolved to preserve its integrity. Admittedly, we know that the dialogue is never easy when law interacts with politics, but we are convinced that in the long-term, nothing will block society's right to demand justice when the most serious crimes against

fundamental values are committed. States have primary responsibility for prosecuting the crimes covered in the Statute of the Court. We urge the world community, including the most powerful among us, to give the Court credibility and resources commensurate with its lofty mission.

Conflict prevention is one of my country's foreign policy priorities. We are engaged concretely in preventive diplomacy, particularly in Central Africa, where Belgium is proactively supportive of the Lusaka and Arusha peace processes. Belgium actively advocates this approach within the European Union. Belgium is seeking to make this concept of conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict support an essential part of international doctrine. We need standing monitoring and warning mechanisms to alert us in time to crises. Such mechanisms could spare the lives of many people. For similar reasons, we need to develop a real strategy against the illegal financing of conflicts and the related illegal trade in natural resources. The sordid exploitation of such resources — for instance, conflict diamonds — too often contributes to finance or at least prolong regional tragedies such as civil wars and inter-ethnic conflicts.

To face this challenge, a credible international monitoring system, based on common standards, has to be established. Substantial improvements must be made in the functioning of the various sanctions committees, and we believe that a single monitoring body, with a long-term mandate, should be set up.

Africa is at the centre of our concerns, but also of our hopes. The creation of the African Union during the Durban summit of the Organization of African Unity, along with the dynamic of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), are major steps forward taken in recent months. The strengthening of democracy and the recent successful elections in Africa are an encouraging sign. The prospects for Africa also include regional integration of African countries, which we encourage. We can see some positive but still fragile signs with regard to reconciliation in countries that have been too long devastated by conflicts, such as the Great Lakes region, Angola and the Sudan.

Further efforts have been made this year to find a solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The inter-Congolese dialogue has led, first, to the signing of a partial agreement at Sun City, which created a dynamic of reconciliation, thanks to the efforts of South Africa, to which I pay tribute here. The Pretoria Agreement addresses the main causes of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: its territorial integrity and the security concerns of Rwanda. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a crucial part to play in ensuring implementation of the Agreement, with its operation to disarm and demobilize the armed groups.

I urge Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take advantage of this opportunity to restore to their peoples the peace and prosperity they deserve. I would also like to pay tribute to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Niasse, for bringing all the Congolese parties to the negotiating table with a view to arriving at a democratic, inclusive agreement.

Through the many meetings I have attended in the region, I have become acquainted with Congolese political figures. I know that they have the will, the authority, the competence and the grasp of history to realize the dream of peace and prosperity of a population which has suffered for too long.

I should like also to pay tribute to the South African and Tanzanian mediation in the context of negotiations for a ceasefire in Burundi. Despite the progress made, there has been a resumption of violence that could undermine the gains recorded in the Arusha process — so ably facilitated by the political and moral authority of President Nelson Mandela. I would also urgently appeal to all international partners to consider which concrete steps should be taken to help Burundi emerge from its political, economic and social crisis. The difficulties prevailing in this area are without a doubt complicating the political solution.

Another area in need of structural stability is the Middle East. Men, women, mothers, fathers, children all are suffering on a daily basis from the violence, and for this reason we must reaffirm those principles that will enable us to find a lasting and equitable solution: land for peace, a viable Palestinian State and security for Israel. Rather than going beyond the gains made through Oslo and Madrid, we should enshrine and reconfirm them by translating them into reality. This is what the European Union has sought to do by drawing up a road map setting out the actions to be taken by the parties concerned with a view to achieving a comprehensive and lasting solution.

Lastly, let me ask a question that I think is of global significance. The question of Iraq is a challenge to all of us, because it involves questions at several different levels: the need to eliminate a major threat to the international community; the need to ensure the credibility of our Organization; the need to determine whether a country has weapons of mass destruction that can bring death to millions of people; the need to determine if a country is failing to meet its obligations to the United Nations; and the need to know if a preventive unilateral military action is or is not a doctrinal problem under international law.

All of these questions are core issues with respect to our Organization, its missions and its individual and collective political responsibilities.

I wish to recall that each and every one of us, in signing the Charter of the United Nations, solemnly undertook to comply with that Charter. Therefore, on behalf of my country and of its citizens, I wish to make a clear appeal to Iraq. I formally and solemnly ask the Iraqi authorities to implement urgently and unconditionally the resolutions adopted by the United Nations. Respect for our Organization and respect for what we are, collectively and individually, is the only way of avoiding recourse to force. I ask the Iraqi authorities to seize this last opportunity.

All of these challenges require a united, multilateral reaction in a spirit of solidarity. The world is a village now, but too often we are rather narrow-minded and do not listen to one another. Sometimes the other is seen as a stranger or even an intruder. Human civilizations must learn more about one another in order to live together in harmony.

The citizens of the world have different perspectives on life, on religion, on the way they organize their society, on the past and the future. But they all dream of justice, happiness and equality. Often they dream the same dream, but the path to implementing that dream sometimes varies. Respecting others even though they are different will help us move towards a more harmonious world. This is what we, as political leaders, have a responsibility to do, in order to broaden day after day the common area of the values that we share.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic): On behalf of the delegation of Laos, I would like, Sir, to convey to you my congratulations on your election to the presidency of this fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

The current session is taking place at a time when Member States have entered the third year of the process of implementation of the Development Goals adopted at the Millennium Summit. During the past two years, satisfactory progress has been made towards those objectives, yet much more needs to be done. It is our view that the war on poverty deserves our greatest attention, for poverty causes millions of deaths and does not allow for sustainable development. Furthermore, our planet is facing the scourge of terrorism in its various forms. Our Government will work in a spirit of solidarity with the world community in the combat against that scourge.

Since the end of the twentieth century, it has been widely claimed that globalization provides tremendous economic and development opportunities to nations. However, it is evident that it has also brought numerous challenges to the majority of the world's population, in particular to those people living in developing countries. The most notable effects of globalization can be seen in the fact that the disparity between the developed and developing countries continues to increase.

Against this backdrop, while the developing countries, with a sense of ownership and partnership, have adopted various measures to cope with its disadvantages, they still find themselves confronted with the problem of securing financing and human resources that can handle new technology; added to this is the inability to access the market of the developed countries. Although the International Conference on Financing for Development and other international conferences have given rise to some hope that these disadvantages and challenges will be addressed, the results have been far from satisfactory.

Moreover, the World Summit held in Johannesburg earlier this month failed to respond to the strong aspirations of the developing countries and of the world community in addressing the issue of sustainable development. Only by implementing the commitments and pledges adopted at those international conferences can we ensure fair and

sustainable development and lasting peace for humankind.

We continue to seek a world of peace, coexistence and cooperation for development. However, to our regret, violent disputes and conflicts continue to rage in many parts of our planet due to the legacies of history and other factors.

We are again gathered here in the conviction that the United Nations, as the only truly universal Organization, should have a greater responsibility and a more important role to play, in accordance with Charter and international law, in resolving various disputes in the world and in preventing the emergence of new hot spots and interference in the internal affairs of independent and sovereign States.

We should also continue to call for reform of the United Nations with a view to enabling it to rise to the formidable challenge of poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development. In particular, the Security Council should be reformed so as to ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities in safeguarding peace and security. In this context, I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, who has worked tirelessly to render our Organization more effective, and wish him even greater success in his endeavours.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic shares the international community's deep concern about the excessive use of force in the Middle East since March this year. In conformity with the common position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Middle East peace process, the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that only a politically negotiated settlement acceptable to both parties and implemented under international supervision will bring peace, stability and cooperation to the region. Such a settlement must be based on respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent and viable State of their own, so that they can live side by side with Israel in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic also expresses great concern about the issue of Iraq — an independent and sovereign nation, and a State Member of the United Nations. We are of the view that this issue should be resolved by the United Nations through political means.

With regard to the Caribbean region, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates its call for the lifting of the economic, financial and trade embargo imposed against the Republic of Cuba by the Government of the United States of America. An end to this long-standing and obsolete policy would not only mean effective compliance with various General Assembly resolutions, international law and the current world thinking, but also promote economic prosperity and cooperation in the region as a whole.

With regard to the Korean Peninsula, the Lao Government welcomes the recent positive developments, especially the inter-Korean ministerial talks, as well as the preparation for negotiations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States of America and Japan. These developments will help pave the way for the achievement of the goal of the peaceful national reunification of Korea, and significantly contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability in East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

While many other countries are taking advantage of the benefits offered by globalization, the landlocked developing countries are still marginalized due to their geographical disadvantage. Their lack of territorial access to the sea, and their remoteness and isolation from major international markets, as well as the high transit transport costs, continue to be major obstacles for those countries in meeting objectives of national economic development and poverty eradication. Moreover, this geographical handicap deprives us of our right to be competitive in the international trading system and to fully benefit from it. As the country holding the chairmanship of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, the Lao People's Democratic Republic expresses its appreciation to the General Assembly for its decision, taken last year, to convene in 2003 an International Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Developmental Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation.

Over the past year, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has recorded a number of important achievements in the field of socio-economic development. One event of significance was the successful election of the fifth National Assembly on 24 February this year. This has contributed to the gradual improvement of living standards of the Lao

people across all ethnic groups and ensured and strengthened political stability and social order.

While extending its cooperation to the international community in many spheres, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has contributed to the strengthening of Asian solidarity and to the cause of peace, friendship, cooperation and development for nations throughout the world.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, and to wish you success in your work. I would also like to thank Mr. Han Seung-soo for having so ably conducted the work of the fifty-sixth session.

It is with special pleasure that I welcome the admission of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations. That we have the pleasure and the opportunity to welcome such a new Member — a long-standing democracy which has only recently chosen to enter this forum — is continuing testimony to the vitality, viability and relevance of this unique body.

This time last year, new States and old were thunderstruck by a terror that is still indescribable. We were reeling from the enormity of what terrorism had wrought, even as we sought to understand why it had happened. Millenniums of experience of the devastation of war had not provided us with the tools necessary to understand that new form of combat.

Today, a year later, as we persevere with the arduous endeavour to eradicate the affliction, we also continue to search for causes. We distinguish, certainly, between comprehending and concurring, awareness and acquiescence, understanding and justification. At the same time, we recognize that diagnosis does not always result in a cure.

We cannot go back to where we were a year ago, either in our assumptions or in our actions. The fundamental question we must all answer is: what is it that we can and cannot, should and should not, do to other human beings? The answer must include a rejection of flagrant injustice and abject poverty. That would go a long way towards alleviating the hopelessness that perpetuates such societal ills.

Bearing that in mind, we welcome the targets and timetables adopted to spur action on a wide range of issues at the recently concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development. Critical among those goals is the need to provide and manage water as a basic element of life and a basic requirement for dignified living. Without that, neither economic nor political stability is possible. The other two major United Nations events of this year — the International Conference on Financing for Development and the special Assembly session on children — also demonstrate that social and economic development must be tackled in tandem in order to attain global peace and security.

In Armenia, too, we are focusing on both aspects of development. The Armenian Government's poverty reduction strategy aims to establish an umbrella for the formulation and implementation of sustainable human development strategies in areas damaged by earthquakes and conflict. We shall do that by building domestic capacities for governance and by restoring social services in education and health, agricultural development, reforestation and disaster preparedness.

Armenia's response to the very special session on children is the elaboration and implementation of its National Plan of Action for Children. The National Plan of Action sets 10-year goals for the protection of the rights of the child, outlines principal strategies, and establishes indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress towards the enumerated goals.

The past decades of summits and forums on the variety of social and economic ills that face modern societies have amply demonstrated that committed partnerships are necessary for serious progress. At home, Government and civil society must work together to implement the decisions of such forums, but, at the global level, Governments and international agencies must also provide the resources and impetus for their universal agendas.

Economic prosperity hinges on internal, regional and international stability. That stability, in turn, depends on cooperation and goodwill. In our region, despite the existence of various conflicts, we continue to be hopeful that democratic processes will create civil societies with responsible leaders committed to the resolution of political issues.

In Armenia, we look forward to a year of elections: presidential elections — the fourth held since

independence — will be followed by parliamentary elections, which in turn will be followed by a referendum on constitutional reforms. We are proud that we have had a working Constitution for more than seven years, and that that Constitution has seen us through difficult periods without leading to domestic turmoil. Nevertheless, we recognize the need — as in any evolving society — to make some changes in order to reflect more accurately our commitment to becoming a society that respects the rule of law and the rights of individuals.

We are equally proud that the Armenians of Nagorny-Karabakh, in the midst of their ongoing struggle for self-determination, have also completed another presidential election cycle. Indeed, the people of Nagorny-Karabakh deserve to be commended for establishing the rule of law despite continuing adverse social and economic conditions.

As the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Co-Chairmen of its Minsk Group continue to work with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny-Karabakh towards a settlement that will wisely — i.e. with an eye to the realities on the ground — determine Nagorny-Karabakh's final status, it is self-evident that only a democratically elected leadership that enjoys a popular mandate will be able to participate actively and legitimately in the final negotiations that affect the status of its own people. With that in mind, in 1992, at the Helsinki Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, it was decided that elected and other representatives of Nagorny-Karabakh would be invited to the Minsk Conference, entrusted with determining the final status of Nagorny-Karabakh.

Therefore, while elections and democratization do not presume a particular status, self-determination is always more legitimate when accompanied by democratic processes. The international community seems to understand, often welcomes and sometimes assists in electoral democratic processes in areas whose international legal status is still in flux and ostensibly subject to the sovereignty of an existing State. We do not understand why such wise and non-prejudicial approaches or strategies should be denied to Nagorny-Karabakh, where de facto self-rule has already been in place for almost 10 years.

Democratization and self-determination become both necessary and inevitable when the formation of a new independent entity takes place inside States that are deficient in democracy and whose respect for human rights and application of United Nations principles is unsatisfactory. Nothing demonstrates that fact more than East Timor's forthcoming membership in this body. So it is with pleasure that we express to that country the heartfelt congratulations of the Armenian Government. East Timor's coming membership is proof that a blanket rejection of claims to self-determination is invalid and does not take into account the very real fact that such movements are not, by their nature, all alike or even similar. Different struggles for self-determination have evolved in decidedly different ways; therefore, each has to be treated differently.

The challenge for the international community continues to be to adopt policies that will contribute to the peaceful solution of each conflict. In order to adopt correct policies, criteria must be established by which to evaluate and judge each case on its own merit, realistically taking into account the real situation on the ground in order to attain lasting peace.

That peace is what the people of Nagorny-Karabakh and the whole region are still waiting for, and one would think that it is also what the leadership of Azerbaijan want. Based on the very hopeful meetings that are taking place between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, we have reasons to be positive. However, having followed the comments that my colleague from Azerbaijan made this morning from this podium, I am not only shocked but also dismayed that he is not keeping pace with the progress being made in the region by the Presidents of both our countries.

It has been two years since the meetings at Paris and Key West, where the international community put forth their views on this issue. Since then, some Azerbaijani officials, out of desperation or ignorance, have used every means at their disposal to discredit the initiatives of the international community, looking for ways to artificially link them to the critical issues of the day.

After 11 September, the talk of the threat of international terrorism caused Azerbaijan to make accusations that went full circle in damaging its own reputation when, according to Western sources, Azerbaijan's own 10-year-long relationship with terrorists came to the surface and it was demonstrated

that Azerbaijan had indeed served as a regional terrorist hub. So that did not work. Today, as the international community speaks of countries' responsibilities under Security Council resolutions, Azerbaijan frivolously makes the same accusation against Armenia, without considering that Armenia has done exactly what the international community expected: it has used its good offices, with the leadership of Nagorny-Karabakh, to help find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Azerbaijan has a choice: continue with crude delusional manipulation and naive wishful thinking and hope for a return to a historical military and political situation that ended long ago, or join the international community, through the good offices of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE's Minsk Group, in order to continue in the difficult search for peace. The people on the ground on all sides have demonstrated their readiness for peace and for political and economic stability. Leaders at the highest level are maintaining the honest dialogue that will chip away at political obstacles. We who are entrusted with transforming those efforts and desires into a just peace must approach our task honestly and responsibly.

Let me say that Nagorny-Karabakh has never, ever been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Whether we consider history or geography, whether we adopt a long-term political perspective or face the reality of the facts on the ground, the men, women and children of Nagorny-Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands.

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate President Kocharian's statement before the General Assembly two years ago with respect to working for the recognition of the Armenian genocide and preventing the repetition of such an atrocity. We extend our profound appreciation to all those Governments, legislatures and international bodies that have recognized the Armenian genocide and pledge our cooperation to all those that are currently in the process of reaffirming the facts of that crime against humanity. As a signatory of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Armenian Government places a high priority on the struggle to prevent future genocide and to stand up against all attempts to deny past genocide. We support all initiatives that reinforce the international consensus behind that landmark treaty.

It is becoming clear that this millennium, too, will not be violence-free. Today, when global peace appears a distant hope, Armenia observes the volatility in the Caucasus, the Middle East and elsewhere with trepidation. To face such challenges, Armenia supports proposals by the Secretary-General aimed at the strengthening of the Organization so that it can face new challenges in a more satisfactory way. Additionally, Armenia is in favour of more equitable representation on the Security Council, as well as more transparency in its activities.

The situation in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and around Iraq remains a continuing example of the need for a vibrant and strengthened United Nations able to assert the will of the Organization's membership and empowered with greater authority to implement its decisions.

As States and Governments continue to search for new ways to deal with emerging internal conflicts and increasingly complex interrelationships, Armenia is of the belief that the United Nations must stand for all the easy-to-orate but difficult-to-deliver principles of economic and political justice and equality among peoples. Given our uneven history and problematic geography, it is no surprise that Armenia is an advocate of multilateralism and collective security. From the vantage point of a country with our resources and limitations, we realize that peace is not possible without social justice, sustainable development and respect for the rights of all individuals and peoples in the community of nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Marwan Muasher, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan.

Mr. Muasher (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, the Czech Republic, warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. Your record of prudence and diplomatic skill will certainly be instrumental in meeting the lofty goals sought by all nations and peoples. A word of thanks and tribute goes to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his outstanding stewardship of the fifty-sixth session.

Two States are being admitted to the membership of our Organization: the Swiss Confederation and, soon, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Despite

their differing histories, each will strengthen the fabric and enrich the tapestry of the United Nations. Jordan bids a warm welcome to both of them and wishes them well.

The opening of the current session coincided with the first anniversary of the heinous terrorist attacks against New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. As I reiterate Jordan's condemnation of those terrorist acts, let me express once again our deep condolences and sympathy to the families of the thousands of victims who lost their lives as a result of the cowardly and criminal acts that targeted our Organization's host city and host nation. The list of victims is multinational, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural. That graphically illustrates the fact that terrorism is indeed blind to all those criteria. The international community rose to the occasion when it provided a prompt, collective, decisive response. Indeed, it was the United Nations itself that provided the forum for a global coalition underpinned by both our common political will and the compelling case before us. Thus, the Assembly adopted resolution 56/1, while the Security Council adopted its resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001). That set of decisions, embraced by our world body, which represents all human cultures, ideologies and ethnicities, created the official platform for launching the ongoing global campaign against terrorism.

My country, Jordan, has also suffered from terrorism and its evils. Terrorists have struck at our national symbols, our citizens and our interests because of our principled positions, foremost among them our firm commitment to fight terrorism. All along, Jordan has been in the vanguard of every international effort aimed at hunting down this plague and confronting it, including by draining its resources as part of an overall drive to uproot it altogether.

In parallel, Jordan's stance is clear-cut and decisive. We reject and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We have declared in no uncertain terms this firm conviction against terrorism, irrespective of its source, the perpetrators or the identity of the victims. Furthermore, we allow no room for any justification whatsoever, including any possible arguments on religious, ethnic or national grounds. Thus, Jordan treats all forms of terrorism as criminal acts.

In the same context, let me stress our conviction that the eradication of terrorism is a common goal of all States and societies. I wish therefore to draw the Assembly's attention to the blatant tendency, driven by pernicious and wicked intentions, to falsely link terrorism to a specific religion or culture. I trust that this gathering shares my view that it is now imperative to confront these dubious attempts. Indeed, dealing with such schemes is indispensable if we are to maintain the sustained and concerted campaign to achieve the paramount objective: the total eradication of terrorism.

The current situation in the Middle East is extremely dangerous. The whole landscape is constantly changing for the worse, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel's reoccupation of the Palestinian Authority's territories and the perpetuation of this occupation, together with the measures and policies emanating thereof, particularly policies of closure and siege, have created intolerable living conditions for the Palestinian people. These unbearable conditions have prompted several humanitarian agencies and international organs to declare a state of emergency. Israeli measures to strangle the Palestinian people economically and politically, with a view to bringing the Palestinians to their knees and to coercing them into surrendering their rights, have reached inadmissible levels of seriousness. Malnutrition rates among the Palestinian population have doubled. Diseases related to malnutrition and hunger have become widespread, particularly among children, women and the elderly. The joint impact of all these factors has created breeding grounds for frustration and despair, which inevitably generate hatred, grudges and violence.

Therefore, this situation must be addressed effectively and expeditiously. We hope that the first move will come from Israel in the form of ending its occupation of Palestinian towns without delay. We also expect Israel to cease forthwith its policies of closures and siege. It is in Israel's interest to pursue constructive policies towards the Palestinians in order to restore mutual confidence and to rehabilitate the values of reconciliation and coexistence between the two peoples. It is our considered view that Israel's current approach is irrational, as it results in excessive use of force, which in turn fuels and deepens hatred and replenishes the sources of violence.

While we welcome the few visible signs of relief, as reflected in the accord reached by the Palestinian and Israeli sides on 19 August 2002, which calls for progressive withdrawal by Israel from certain Palestinian towns that have been reoccupied by Israel, we call on Israel to implement faithfully and expeditiously Security Council resolution 1402 (2002), which provides for full Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian cities.

From a political and humanitarian point of view, Jordan stands against targeting Israeli civilians and concurs with the need to address the whole spectrum of security issues. However, it maintains that the only viable course for addressing the Palestinian-Israeli question lies in the resumption of the peace process as a whole, from the point where it stalled and within the agreed framework established on the basis of complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories; the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 1397 (2002).

In that context, I wish to stress the significance of the initiative adopted by the Arab leaders at the Beirut Arab Summit last March. That initiative outlined a balanced approach in terms of practical ideas and arguments that demonstrate beyond any doubt a genuine pan-Arab commitment to just, lasting and comprehensive peace. That plan is a pledge by Arab States to conclude peace agreements with Israel in return for its complete withdrawal from the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories to the 4 June 1967 borders, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem its capital and finding a just and agreed solution to the Palestinian refugees question on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I trust that the Government of Israel will rise to the level of the hopes and aspirations of the Arab peoples and the people of Israel to live in peace, justice and dignity. We hope that the Government of Israel will be forthcoming in response to that balanced and sincere initiative, which gained the acceptance of all States and parties interested in the peace process. Furthermore, this initiative is also in line with the vision and the commitment outlined by President George W. Bush of the United States on the form and aim of a final solution on the Palestinian-Israeli track based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state existing alongside the State of Israel by mid-2005 at the latest.

In that regard, Jordan supports efforts being made to draw up a clear road map leading to the implementation of President Bush's commitment through, first, defining the obligations of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides; secondly, setting a clear timetable for all phases of carrying out those obligations so that the deadline for the birth of the independent Palestinian State will not, under any circumstances, extend beyond mid-2005; and, thirdly, agreeing to the creation of an international supervisory mechanism that ensures the timely and orderly implementation of those measures as well as monitoring the implementation process.

We hope that this vision will be examined at the Quartet meeting in New York within the next few days, with a view to adopting it into a plan of action and a comprehensive international obligation. Subsequently, the parties will embark on the implementation process within the specified framework, whose outcome will be the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within less than three years. We also hope that this achievement will generate a fresh impetus to conclude comprehensive peace on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks within the same time frame.

In compliance with the United Nations principles enshrined in the Charter, particularly Article 2, paragraph 4, which prohibits the threat or use of force in international relations, and considering that this right is exclusively assigned to the Security Council so that the Council may exercise it in case of a breach of international peace and security, Jordan believes that the most appropriate means for resolving the matters outstanding between the United Nations and Iraq is to ensure the immediate and full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including those relating to Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons as well as to the return of the weapons inspectors. If these conditions are met, the people of Iraq, who have been suffering for too long, would be saved from military action that would exacerbate that suffering. The aforementioned formula would also spare the entire region the dire consequences of military operations.

In the context of emphasizing the principle of resolving disputes by peaceful means, we invite the

Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the call made by the United Arab Emirates to reach a peaceful settlement of the problem of the three islands. We urge Iran to accept referral of this case to the International Court of Justice. We also encourage the efforts made by the two sides in Cyprus to reach a just and peaceful solution to the Cypriot question. We also call for the peaceful resolution of the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. We have no doubt that the Assembly will support and strengthen those efforts.

Jordan recognizes the nature of the transformations that have taken place in international relations and the global landscape over the past decade. Thus, we stress the need for the United Nations to adapt accordingly, through effective streamlining, so that it will maintain its relevance as the primary international forum of global cooperation and coordination in all human fields. A robust United Nations would also remain the true embodiment of the hopes and the aspirations of all mankind.

Here, I wish to pay special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the foresight, dynamism and flexibility he brings into play while performing his duties. Those fine personal qualities enhance his impressive performance, which Jordan supports and appreciates.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In closing, I would like to warmly welcome the establishment of the International Criminal Court and the entry into force of its Statute. Our expectation is that the Court will enhance the great principles and purposes of the United Nations itself. Let me underline our absolute support for all efforts aimed at strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations system, including the ongoing structural reform exercise and the review of Security Council membership with a view to its expansion in order to make it more representative of the new international realities. Finally, I wish the Assembly all success in its deliberations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Joseph Borg, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta.

Mr. Borg (Malta): Allow me to begin by offering Mr. Jan Kavan my Government's warm congratulations as he assumes the presidency of the General Assembly. He has served the Czech Republic so well as Foreign Minister, and I have full faith in his ability to meet the numerous challenges that the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly will no doubt present. I assure him of my delegation's full support in the execution of his duties.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Mr. Han Seung-soo for the skill and dedication with which he served this body during the session that has just come to a close.

It gives the Government of Malta great pleasure to welcome the recent admission of the Swiss Confederation to our family of nations. We look forward to also welcoming among us the Democratic Republic of East Timor. Their addition serves to further strengthen the trust and belief of all our nations that dialogue within a multilateral context is both worthwhile and irreplaceable.

Over the past couple of weeks the international community has been seized of the issue of sustainable development. Malta participated actively in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in South Africa, and although the Summit's very ambitious objectives could not all be reached, we are satisfied that a plan of action — the Plan of Implementation — with specific targets to tackle key development problems has been adopted. Throughout the negotiations, Malta worked closely with the European Union to include concrete plans and targets in the plan of action. As a result, the Summit agreed on a series of commitments in priority areas such as water and sanitation, desertification, energy and biodiversity. It is our hope that the plan of action will attract the necessary additional resources that will make its implementation possible, thereby making sustainable development a reality for an ever-increasing proportion of humanity.

When I had the honour to address the Assembly at the last general debate, in November 2001, I pledged my Government's full support for the Franco-German initiative against the reproductive cloning of human beings. As a sponsor of resolution 56/93, which established the relevant Ad Hoc Committee, we have carefully followed the deliberations within the Committee on the philosophical, medical, legal and ethical considerations associated with this pressing issue. This was a necessary debate which brought to the fore the consensus that exists on the need to

respond to the challenges posed by scientists who are unable or unwilling to recognize the deep moral implications of their actions, as well as the dangers that they may pose to mankind. The convergence of political will has now been manifested. The time is therefore ripe for the Ad Hoc Committee to be given a clear mandate to negotiate a convention on this matter. My Government will strive for the timely conclusion of negotiations in this regard, preferably before the end of 2003. However, whether or not the international community concludes such a convention before attempts at reproductive human cloning actually materialize, it is imperative that, through international action and national legislation, Member States deny safe haven to those scientists willing to defy the international community.

Before this year is out we shall be commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. When, as a newly independent State, Malta called for the commencement of negotiations on such a convention, it was concerned with the numerous unresolved issues of the rights and obligations of States with regard to seas and oceans, and with the seeds of countless conflicts that they might sow. It is today impossible to speculate on the number of occasions on which the legal certainties that the Convention brought about have helped to defuse, dissipate or prevent altogether the scourge of conflict and war. It is the curse of international law in our times to make the news headlines only when it fails, while passing unnoticed and unsung when it succeeds.

We would do well to remain conscious of the role that international law, based on the multilateral process, plays in the prevention of conflict and the avoidance of threats to international security. That is to say, we would do well to remember the role it plays in upholding the central mandate of the United Nations itself. The role of the instruments of international law, and in particular those such as the Convention on the Law of the Sea, should be recognized for the contribution they provide in that regard.

United Nations Headquarters has just played host to the historic first session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The complex changes to national legislation necessary to allow for Malta's ratification of the Rome Statute have now reached an advanced stage and are expected to be presented to Parliament in the coming days, thus enabling Malta to formally deposit its instrument of ratification very soon.

The new International Criminal Court (ICC) has its roots in the atrocities carried out during the last century — not least those addressed at the Nuremberg trials. The ICC is thus a product of the lessons learned over time and of the widespread political will that has led to the creation of a credible deterrent to the would-be perpetrators of the most heinous crimes. The ICC thus provides an effective, competent and fair forum where those individuals may be tried. The establishment of the Court also represents a major breakthrough in international law and one which has become more — and not less — crucial now that terrorism has imposed itself high on our international agenda.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 still loom large in our memories. The anniversary of that tragedy has again filled our television screens with horrific scenes of suffering and death. It has served to remind us of the resolve which is necessary in the face of such horror. My Government has taken part in the fight against international terrorism with full determination, and will continue to do so. This is evidenced not only by our thorough implementation of the international conventions on terrorism and the ongoing process towards the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) but also by ever-tighter controls and scrutiny at our ports. We undertake further to intensify our efforts in this field in order to assist in the permanent eradication of terrorism in whatever shape or form.

The continued turbulence in the Middle East also continues to be a source of great concern to my Government. The cycle of violence that continues to engulf the region provides a confirmation, if ever one were needed, that there is no purely military solution to the conflict. The extrajudicial killings of Palestinians, the deliberate destruction of the property and livelihoods of innocent civilians and the subjection of the entire Palestinian population to collective punishment does not dim the wholly legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to a State of their own.

Likewise, the targeting of Israeli civilians in suicide bombings and other forms of destruction of the lives and property of innocent civilians does untold

harm to the cause the perpetrators of those crimes claim to support.

No cause, no argument and no justification can legitimize these abhorrent acts by either party to the conflict.

My Government looks on in anguish as a fence, reminiscent of the Berlin wall, that most shameful of symbols of the twentieth century, slowly takes shape. It is a harrowing reminder of how little mankind has learned from the past, particularly if we look back to the outbreak of violence in the region since September 2000.

Unjustified preconditions to the start of political negotiations further hinder any progress in the discussions on a two-State solution to the conflict. Negotiations, which must start without further delay, must be built on the clear and plain language of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. The recent initiative by the States members of the European Union in presenting a road map for the Middle East which outlines a three-stage process leading to the creation of a Palestinian State by 2005 provides a genuine basis for taking negotiations forward. The international community looks to the Quartet to advance in that direction with urgency.

An issue which continues to persist in the Mediterranean is the situation in Cyprus, which has remained a cause of concern for more than 25 years. We earnestly hope that an early settlement of the Cyprus question will be found and reiterate our full support for efforts to find a solution on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. The imminent accession of Cyprus to the European Union should provide the necessary impetus for the resolution of this long-standing problem.

Malta is encouraged by the efforts of the Secretary-General to engage the Organization in the quest to achieve a resolution to the situation with regard to Iraq before it deteriorates any further. My Government calls upon the Iraqi Government to comply with all its obligations under all the provisions of relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular those concerning disarmament with respect to weapons of mass destruction. Iraq must meet its commitments and allow the re-entry of United Nations inspectors into its territory without any preconditions and as stipulated by the Security Council.

The international community should spare no effort in exploring all political and diplomatic options that would or could assist in resolving the issue. Malta is in agreement with the Secretary-General that if Iraq fails to meet its obligations, the Security Council, as the organ entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must shoulder its responsibilities. The Security Council has to ensure compliance with its own resolutions in the interest of the international rule of law.

Malta's location at the centre of the Mediterranean has provided us with opportunities for trade and development, which we have been relatively successful at exploiting in the interest of our island, which is otherwise bereft of natural resources. Our strategic location is, however, now also the scene of another socio-economic phenomenon of a much less encouraging nature. I speak here of the poverty divide that cuts across the Mediterranean Sea.

The countries of the Mediterranean littoral share much in terms of history, culture and way of life. However the ever more apparent disparities of wealth continue to fuel the movement of thousands of people from the southern Mediterranean and further afield to entrust their lives and hopes into the hands of unscrupulous individuals. These traffickers of human beings, willing to exploit misery and desperation, have little respect for human life and often abandon the would-be immigrants to the elements once they have secured their ill-gotten gains. My Government has increased the punishment meted out to those found guilty of such heinous acts. We have also bolstered our surveillance and rescue capability within our territorial waters and are simultaneously seeking to provide treatment that is as humane as possible to the victims that land on our shores. These efforts have been made, however, in the full knowledge that they deal more with the symptoms of the phenomenon of human trafficking than with its root causes.

The imperative of narrowing the wealth divide across the Mediterranean is one of the philosophical cornerstones of the Euro-Med process, which exists to bring the European Union and 12 Mediterranean States together on a number of issues of common concern. Malta has been an avid supporter of the process since its inception and looks forward to developing its role further within this forum as a member of the European Union in the near future.

My Government believes that the accession of Malta to the European Union will serve to further enhance our capability to promote peace and prosperity within the Mediterranean, given our reputation as an honest broker that can identify with both sides of the Mediterranean.

Inasmuch as this is the case, we also believe that membership in the Union will also serve to strengthen our own internal workings at all levels of society, bringing prosperity to the Maltese both now and for the years to come. Indeed, we believe that membership in the European Union constitutes a natural progression for Malta, given our long-standing historical, cultural and political ties with the Union.

The negotiations concerning membership that are currently under way are nearing completion, and we look forward to joining this union of like-minded States at its next enlargement, in line with the timelines established at the Nice meeting of the European Council.

Malta has always played a role on the international scene far in excess of its size. This we intend to continue, and I anticipate that all our efforts will combine with those of the other nations of the world to bring about improvements in all the areas that urgently call for our immediate attention. This unswerving determination will guide our efforts in the various forums of which we form part and in the activities we undertake, as together we strive to make a better and secure world for this and future generations.

I wish the President every success in his endeavours in presiding over the General Assembly.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. László Kovács, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Kovács (Hungary): Let me at the outset extend to His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, former Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, our sincere congratulations upon his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I want to assure him that he can safely count on the full support of my delegation in discharging his important responsibilities.

I would also like to welcome in our midst the latest new State Member of the United Nations, Switzerland.

It was only four days ago, when so many of us here paid tribute at Ground Zero to the memories of the thousands of victims who lost their lives last year in the brutal 11 September terrorist attacks. The remembrance there was heartbreaking, but at the same time it was a day of resolve as well. There is no doubt in my mind: this was a time that again brought into focus our deep commitment to freedom and democracy. In that regard, I would like to reiterate that the people and the Government of Hungary continue to maintain relentlessly their strong solidarity with the United States.

Our contemporary world has been decisively transformed since 11 September 2001. The fight against international terrorism is high on our agenda. Hungary is strongly committed to the effective efforts of the community of nations to counter this threat. Towards that goal, we have consistently acted in cooperation with our allies and the rest of the international community.

In that respect, Hungary supports the ongoing global endeavours of the United Nations aimed against terrorism. We find it crucial that Member States make every necessary and possible move to prevent further terrorist acts and implement national measures under relevant Security Council resolutions to combat that phenomenon. Effective cooperation among States is also indispensable to act resolutely against the menace of terrorism.

Besides being a reliable partner in the global coalition, Hungary has taken the necessary domestic legislative and executive measures to implement the decisions of the international community. The Parliament of Hungary this week took the decision to ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. By this legislative act, Hungary has become a party to all of the international instruments adopted by the United Nations against terrorism. We continue to attach particular importance to the unimpeded work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council, with which we maintain a particularly close relationship.

In the context of the global coalition against terrorism, Hungary is following developments in Afghanistan with keen interest. We welcome the consolidation achieved so far by the Government of Afghanistan with the assistance of the international community. We wish to place on record our deep

appreciation for the excellent work done by the international forces, in that country. Further efforts to contain and eliminate terrorist groups in Afghanistan will remain a top priority. Hungary is committed to maintaining its support to the Government of Afghanistan as well as to its people.

Iraqi non-compliance with Security Council resolutions is a serious concern for all of us. Hungary regrets that the Iraqi regime refuses to cooperate with the United Nations and continues to pose a threat to peace and security in the region and the world at large. The international community cannot disregard this fact and has to respond to it in a resolute manner. We will work closely with our allies and partners to pursue the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and we will do our share in the efforts to build a broad coalition of nations in order to prevent the Iraqi regime from producing and using weapons of mass destruction.

Having entered the twenty-first century, mankind continues to face further major global challenges, such as illicit drug trafficking, money-laundering, corruption and transnational organized crime. The role of the United Nations in facing and tackling these phenomena is of paramount importance. By the same token, global risks are widened by new types of security threats. In our view, serious problems of regional stability, of low-intensity armed conflicts and threats of natural and man-made catastrophes are increasingly on the rise. Illegal transfers of nuclear, biological and chemical materials pose grave threats. Illegal migration and illicit trafficking in human beings are also rightly viewed as new forms of security risks. Hungary is more than prepared to play its role, with all the means at our disposal, to meet these new challenges through concerted international efforts, including regional arrangements.

The year 2002 marked the beginning of a new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We expect the annual sessions of the Preparatory Committee leading up to the 2005 Review Conference to make a significant contribution to the further strengthening of all aspects of this legal instrument by ensuring its full implementation and promoting its universality.

The early start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty stands out as the next logical step aimed at curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We cannot but regret that disagreements over the comprehensive programme of work are preventing the Conference on Disarmament from starting substantive work on this issue.

One of the most important new threats to international peace and stability in the changed security environment at the beginning of the twenty-first century is caused by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. Hungary is ready to join international efforts to counter this danger, including new political and diplomatic initiatives. The system of multilateral legal norms relating to non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control fails to include regulations on responsible international behaviour concerning ballistic missiles. Out of the several propositions emerged recently, Hungary lends its utmost support to the negotiations on an international code of conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. We appreciate the vigorous efforts of the States members of the European Union to move this process forward and hope for its successful completion in the near future.

Developments over the past 12 months have raised more critically than ever the question of how to address in an efficient way the challenges posed by the deliberate spread of disease, such as the anthrax incidents. The reinforcement of national public health and civilian defence capabilities is crucial, even though there are only a few countries that, acting alone, can put meaningful assets in place. International cooperation in this respect must not be a distant opportunity; it is in the interest of each and every country, and of all nations as a whole.

Complementary preventive efforts would be needed as well to at least diminish the likelihood of such an occurrence. Among such preventive efforts, the benchmarking of arms control compliance will eventually have to find its legitimate place. That is why we deem important the successful conclusion of the Fifth Review Conference of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, to be resumed in November this year under Hungarian chairmanship. Hungary remains strongly committed to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its verification regime. In this regard, we concur with the view that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will also be essential to combat international terrorism.

Hungary has, from the very beginning, given its strong support to the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC has become the first major multilateral legal institution of the twenty-first century. We were proud to become a State party to the Statute of the ICC and to be among those whose ratification helped bring about the entry into force of the Statute this year. We firmly concur with the view that international law will be strengthened through this new legal institution.

As a sign of our deep commitment to the Rome Statute, my Government has decided to nominate a candidate to the panel of judges of the ICC. I am confident that the election of a Hungarian judge would contribute to the genuine realization of the objectives set out in the Rome Statute.

Human rights are universal values. States Members of the United Nations are expected to observe the norms and standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including minority rights, adopted by the United Nations. By the same token, it will remain the moral and political responsibility of States to call upon others to act in accordance with their voluntarily undertaken obligations. Hungary will not hesitate to raise its voice when human rights are violated in any part of the world. International protection of minority rights remains a major preoccupation for us. We continue to pursue our efforts aimed at a functioning universal legal system for the protection of minorities.

Globalization and interdependence are two major phenomena shaping the contemporary world, including the political landscape of the United Nations.

By taking advantage of the opportunities stemming from these phenomena, all of us could seek a much better life for the inhabitants of our globe. The United Nations has the necessary instruments at hand. A better and more responsible use of these instruments can contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration Development Goals, aimed at creating a more prosperous and sustainable world for generations to come.

If we have the necessary political will and determination, we can have a United Nations that works relentlessly to improve the lives of all. That is, in the final analysis, what the United Nations was founded for.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. George Papandreou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece): The challenges we face at the beginning of the twenty-first century are immense. We are facing terrible poverty; crises and wars; millions of refugees; the hideous face of terrorism; trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs; and regions decimated by disease as we continue to destroy the earth's ecological balance.

There are no simple answers to these problems. But there is a place where we all can meet to find solutions: the United Nations. The world needs a strong United Nations.

I have just quoted my Swiss colleague, first of all to celebrate his country's and East Timor's entry into the United Nations, and secondly because I fully agree with his statement.

In the words of Kofi Annan:

> "The more a country makes use of multilateral institutions — thereby respecting shared values, and accepting the obligations and restraints inherent in those values — the more others will trust and respect it, and the stronger its chance to exercise true leadership". *(See A/57/PV.2)*

I know the personal commitment of my dear friend Jan Kavan, the President, to this principle. Our two countries have worked closely in a common effort to promote peace, the rule of law and shared values in South-eastern Europe.

Today we can be proud that we also contributed in changing this region. It is no longer "CNN-able", as our colleague from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Lagumdjia, said yesterday.

Yet this has not been an easy process.

Take my country, Greece. In the previous century, we went through two world wars, two Balkan wars and a major war with Turkey, which resulted in millions of refugees and in painful population exchanges. We suffered under civil war, famine and dictatorship. We witnessed the forced division of Cyprus through military invasion and occupation by Turkey, and the recent wars in the disintegrating former Yugoslavia in our backyard. Not far from us, conflict continues. We stand ready to support all efforts to ensure that Israel

may be secure and that the Palestinians may have a State they can call their own.

It is no wonder that today we cherish the peace we have achieved. It is no wonder that we cherish the fact that Greece today has its most stable democracy in modern history, that we are among the more prosperous countries in the world, and that we will soon be hosting one of the most demanding events humankind has created, the Olympics. This to us is a responsibility.

We have learned our lessons. We are where we are today only because of our people's steadfast commitment to work for the shared values of democracy, peace, justice, and human rights.

It is no wonder that Greece has become a champion of the enlargement of the European Union, because the European Union is a community of values, and being a community of values is the biggest peace project of our region. We have a responsibility to our neighbours, from Turkey to Bosnia and Herzegovina, to see them, sooner or later, part of this wider European family — creating a new vision where all can share the values of peace and democracy and be citizens of the European Union.

We have learned that at the heart of these conflicts are human beings, as the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Rasmussen, has said. We have learned that democracy and human rights are fundamental to the life and dignity of all human beings.

Whenever our global principles are violated, it is usually in societies and places where extremism and lack of democracy exist. I believe that democracy will isolate the phenomena that we have seen in recent years, such as that of 11 September.

We in Greece have also known terrorism. We have suffered at the hands of a small terrorist organization called November 17. Since June, Greek security forces have brought all the key members of November 17 to justice. This formidable achievement was supported by assistance from allied intelligence agencies, to which we are indebted for their support. This experience is just one more example of how close international cooperation can accomplish common goals and protect our common values. It is also a tribute to our long-lasting democratic institutions.

In the European Union, we are building not only a community of nations but a community of values. The Greek presidency of the European Union, which begins in January 2003, will promote the values of democracy and peace in every element of its agenda. We want to focus our efforts on reinforcing the trans-Atlantic relationship. We believe that the United States and the European Union share the same democratic values. We must stand united in our efforts to promote peace within a multilateral framework.

We also will pay tribute to the cultural diversity that is at the heart of the European project, with a focus on reinvigorating democratic governance by renewing our efforts to build social inclusiveness and civil participation across borders, working with our new neighbours, from the Baltic region to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Caucasus, a new neighbourhood of peace, cooperation and democracy.

In this community of values, I should like to talk about a case in point. A few years ago, the notion of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey was unthinkable. Now, with a common European vision, our Governments are creating a framework to solve existing problems, and citizen's diplomacy is building a bridge of peace between our nations. Athens and Ankara have concluded a number of agreements in areas ranging from energy to tourism, from education to landmines, designed to ease tension and strengthen our common interests. While fundamental differences remain on certain issues, in a short space of time, we have come a long way — and we surely can go further. I welcome my discussion and meeting with the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gürel, and his willingness to continue on this path of rapprochement and peace.

Yet our shared values are being sorely tested on the issue of Cyprus. There is now a compelling deadline for a resolution to the continuing division of the island. Negotiations for the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union will be finalized in December. We hope that a free, united Cyprus will join a free, united Europe. Unification will undoubtedly bring greater security and prosperity to both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island. But if a political settlement is not reached, the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus will join alone. Let us therefore work to break down the walls that keep future European Union citizens apart.

With the exception of Turkey, the whole world shares a vision for Cyprus as a federal State with a

single international personality and a single citizenship, no foreign troops on its soil, and equal rights and security guarantees for both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The vast majority of the Cypriot population agrees that the two communities can and should live together, united by shared values, while preserving their individual cultural identities.

We must respect United Nations resolutions on Cyprus. They must be honoured, as my Maltese colleague just repeated.

Cyprus is also a critical factor for the stability and security of South-eastern Europe and the Middle East. A solution to this problem, therefore, will widen the area of stability and peace throughout the region.

Not much farther away, the situation in Iraq is a challenge for us all. It challenges our respect for international law and our respect for international organizations. Greece vows to act in the way it sees fit to safeguard these valued principles.

In dealing with Iraq, our actions must be guided by evidence of a threat to global security, and must be embedded in respect for the well-being of the Iraqi people. We must exhaust all available diplomatic means to ensure that Iraq complies with existing United Nations resolutions, immediately accepts the unconditional return of United Nations weapons inspectors and destroys all weapons of mass destruction. This will free the people of Iraq from the economic sanctions, which are depriving them of their basic needs.

We welcome the statement by President Bush. By taking the issue of Iraq back to the Security Council, he has both challenged the Council and empowered it to move forward more effectively and more credibly.

Democracy is a value that should not be taken for granted. It must be reinforced to meet new challenges in a globalizing world. In this spirit, Greece launched, in Johannesburg, the first-ever online global poll on sustainable development and the environment. Electronic democracy offers tremendous potential for bridging the digital divide that separates many peoples and individuals, for strengthening civil participation and for enhancing global democratic legitimacy and transparency. We suggest that the United Nations establish a new global forum — an electronic Demos — where citizens could articulate their views, mobilize around the issues that concern them and shape political decision-making, both nationally and internationally.

Greece will make good on its commitment to sustainable development by taking concrete actions and identifying specific targets.

This year, many countries celebrated the establishment of an institution that was founded on the premise that good global governance must be built on sound global principles. The International Criminal Court represents a commitment by our community of nations that no crime against humanity will go unpunished. Creating a watertight system of global justice which requires all countries to uphold common rules, principles and rights will be an important step towards building a real community of global values.

Finally, I would like to say that those values lie at the heart of the Olympic Truce, which was endorsed by the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Declaration. It is global peace initiative which was just recently endorsed by the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. When he signed the Olympic Truce in June, President Mandela said:

> "The Olympic Games represent one of the most evocative moments of celebration of our unity as human beings in pursuit of noble ideas. Among those ideas is the quest for global peace."

We uphold the values of democracy, human rights, peace and sustainable development; they can enrich us all. They can inspire us and challenge us. They are values that can inspire change in one person, in one community or in a large nation. They are values that can change the life of not just one person, but the world as a whole. These are the values upon which we must build our future and the future of our children.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Farsi; English text furnished by the delegation*): I would like at the outset to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to assure him of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran as he embarks on his crucial task. I would also like to express my appreciation to the President of Assembly at its fifty-

sixth session for his skilful leadership. I would also like to welcome Switzerland to the United Nations, and look forward also to welcoming the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his strong and compassionate leadership and for the vision and wisdom that he expressed in his statement before the Assembly.

The world today is characterized by great diversity and emerging factors with a far-reaching influence. In the light of advances in information technology and of the new international information order, current issues and problems are interrelated, like the parts of an organism, and truly global. More than ever before, we see that nations and States are seeking to expand their options and ascertain the nature and the extent of their contribution to, and participation in, global affairs on the basis of not only their national security and interests but also their regional responsibilities, as well as international requirements and norms. This trend towards the achievement of such fundamental objectives points to the expansion of a global, democratic and participatory process that will endure in the long term and is thus sustainable.

Embracing diversity, questioning and critically reviewing the past and seeking democratic participation and action all teach us that the fundamental universal human values of peace and security, freedom and independence, and justice and fairness must become the very centre of global attention. Without continued, active cooperation to draw our world closer to such fundamental values, we will not successfully meet the current global challenges. Without expanding the scope of peace and security, neither freedom nor independence will be achievable; without justice and fairness, neither peace nor security will become accessible; and without freedom and independence, both peace and security will become impossible to attain. It is only through such an approach that we will be able to work together, think together and cooperate in a multilateral framework so as to find answers to challenges we face in common and to deal with regional crises.

The world is facing grave challenges today, particularly in the aftermath of the tragic terror attacks of 11 September 2001. Chief among these challenges are terrorism and other forms of violence. Combating the sinister phenomenon of terrorism is an urgent and unavoidable imperative. A genuine and effective fight against terrorism must include, on the one hand, an attempt to identify the root causes of terrorism and, on the other, a concerted effort by the international community to address them. It goes without saying that the perpetrators of acts of terrorism must be brought to justice and given their just deserts. Calling for the root causes of terrorism to be addressed should in no way be construed as an attempt to justify terrorism or detract from the gravity of terrorist acts or from the severity of the punishments that terrorists deserve. It is intended to pinpoint an effective and comprehensive means of eliminating terrorism.

In this context, it appears that exploring problems such as the worldwide increase in injustice and discrimination, the marginalization of a large number of people and occupation and the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others, extremism, fanaticism, bigotry, poverty and underdevelopment could prove helpful in identifying the root causes of terrorism.

In our opinion, a wise and principled approach to fighting terrorism would entail full international cooperation, expressed at the highest political level in a world summit that would seek, inter alia, to develop an inclusive definition of terrorism that is generally acceptable.

In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General immediately after the disastrous attacks of 11 September, President Khatami called for such a world summit to address this crucial issue and to encourage international cooperation to fight terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations.

There should be a worldwide campaign against all forms and manifestations of terrorism and their perpetrators, irrespective of the identity of the victims or the objectives. Distinction must also be made between acts of terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples under foreign occupation or aggression, in accordance with international law. Any campaign bent on relating the inhuman phenomenon of terrorism to divine religions that have always been the harbingers of peace, love, amity and moral decency is a great and unforgivable transgression against those religions and their countless followers.

As a victim of the most brutal acts of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran regards fighting terrorism in a genuine and comprehensive way as a top national

priority, and it is thus in the forefront of the international coalition against terrorism. To help promote regional and international peace and security, my country has thus far signed bilateral agreements or is in the process of finalizing such agreements with more than 20 countries on the extradition of offenders and on the provision of legal assistance for promoting cooperation in the areas of fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and other organized crimes, of the extradition of criminals and of mutual legal assistance. We are intent on further strengthening this policy of enhanced cooperation. In that context, and in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1390 (2002), the Islamic Republic of Iran has reported to the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee regarding its counter-terrorism efforts in general and about the measures it has adopted against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in particular.

We are greatly concerned by the current trend of international disarmament negotiations, which is leading to the further vulnerability and fragility of international security. Rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by a permanent member of the Security Council and the holder of the largest nuclear arsenal, and the withdrawal of that member from negotiations on the CTBT on-site inspection operational manual, point to that State's policy of unilateralism. Further signs of such a policy are its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, its blocking of the negotiations on a protocol strengthening the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and its going against the judgement of the international community with respect to the regulation of the trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

It is only by developing a broader view of multilateralism, international cooperation and respect for the rule of law that we can guarantee progress and success in the field of disarmament and international security issues. Expansion of and deeper respect for human rights throughout the world are a function of their universality and indivisibility, on the one hand, and of the recognition of national and regional particularities and cultural backgrounds, on the other.

Rejecting the use of human rights for political purposes, rejecting double standards and discriminatory approaches, and promoting international cooperation in that field for the sake of human rights will definitely help promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Such an approach prevailed at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights, and my country thus received a favourable decision. We are pleased that, with the cooperation of other States, our draft resolutions on developing international cooperation in the field of human rights and on promoting cultural diversity were adopted.

Globalization will yield fruitful results when it is accompanied by a non-selective and non-discriminatory approach: when it provides equal opportunities for all within the framework of a global partnership. If the developed countries fail to fulfil their responsibilities, globalization can hardly be called a success story. An open, equitable, law-based, transparent and non-discriminatory international trading system is a prerequisite for achieving the goals of economic growth and sustainable development in developing countries.

The continued brutalities in occupied Palestine once again indicate that solutions not well grounded in justice and realism will fail to bring about lasting peace in the Middle East region. The Palestinian people have the right, under international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to persist in their struggle to restore their inalienable rights. Occupying other people's land must be condemned, as must labelling as terrorist a nation that is only fighting to liberate its homeland.

The way to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East is to guarantee to Palestinians the right to return to their homeland and the right to self-determination, leading to the formation — in a democratic process and under the supervision of the United Nations — of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. It is the Palestinian people's legitimate right to choose, through democratic means, their future political system and the manner in which they elect to establish their civil and political order. We respect the choices that the Palestinian people make.

The long-standing policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Afghanistan has been the rejection of violence, the promotion of intra-Afghan dialogue and the establishment of a representative Government by democratic means. We are pleased that, as a result of international efforts — particularly by the United Nations — civil order is gradually being consolidated by the Afghan people themselves through the

establishment of the Interim Administration, the Emergency Loya Jirga and the Transitional Government. Formulating Afghanistan's Constitution on the basis of democratic principles, Afghan culture and tradition, taking into account the views of all ethnic groups, will be a major step in consolidating law and order, in strengthening the political structure and in achieving peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is continuing its close cooperation with the Transitional Government of Afghanistan, especially in the context of spending the $50 million in assistance earmarked for small-scale reconstruction projects in Afghanistan during the Iranian fiscal year 1381, which began on 21 March 2002. Joint efforts that are moving forward include providing custom facilities and preferential arrangements in customs, transit, trade and scientific, cultural and educational cooperation, combating drug trafficking and terrorism, and helping Afghan refugees to return to Afghanistan. The international community is expected to make good on its pledges to Afghanistan so as to begin to rebuild the economic infrastructure there and to create conditions conducive to the voluntary return of Afghan refugees to their homeland. Greater attention and resources must be invested — particularly by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme — in crop substitution programmes in Afghanistan as an effective strategy to fight narcotics trafficking.

Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and compliance by Iraq with relevant Security Council resolutions — particularly those concerning the return of the weapons inspectors to Iraq — followed by the lifting of international sanctions in the interest of the oppressed people of Iraq, constitute the overall policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Iraq. We oppose any unilateral measures or military intervention in Iraq, we underline the central role of the United Nations in that regard, and we hold that it is up to the people of Iraq to determine their own future through democratic means.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is following the situation between its two neighbours, Pakistan and India, with much concern. As a neighbour, we wish to stress the age-old wisdom of the subcontinent and to impress upon the leadership in both countries the importance of exercising self-restraint in both word and deed and of keeping open the lines of communication and dialogue with a view to resolving the situation in accordance with the rules and principles of international law and in the interests of both nations.

The current global trend towards participation in collective efforts to face major international challenges and resolve regional crises through democratic means has raised a glimmer of hope for our world today. No doubt, dialogue among civilizations has a special place in charting the way and promoting understanding and tolerance in these troubled times. Dialogue, as a multifaceted and long-term process, teaches us to grow out of the politics of domination that have created so much agony and violence and gradually to opt for the politics of interaction, tolerance and communication. In this context, the United Nations, as a centre of dialogue, international decision-making and implementation, will increasingly gain in importance as the international community resolves to strengthen international peace, security and development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda.

Mr. Miranda (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese, English text provided by the* delegation): Allow me, on behalf of my Government and in my own name, to salute Mr. Kavan on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his knowledge and diplomatic experience will guide us to success in our activities.

As the international situation remains caught in the throes of instability, insecurity, economic backwardness and the scourge of pandemics and hunger, we nevertheless note with pleasure the great progress that has been made since our last session. After decades of conflict, peace was finally restored throughout southern Africa and is now slowly becoming a reality in other regions. The people of East Timor were finally able to assert their self-determination and independence. Countries such as Angola, which have actively advocated the legitimate rights and interests of East Timor at the United Nations, take great pleasure in welcoming that new sister republic to the family of this world Organization.

Important advances were also made by the international community in the struggle against terrorism. Thanks to a global and coordinated effort, major terrorist networks have been dismembered. Angola reiterates its strong condemnation of terrorist acts, such as that perpetrated against the American

people in September last year. Angola continues to be committed to the strict implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We support stronger control measures, particularly in the financial area, so as increasingly to curb the scope of action of terrorist groups.

All these advances underscore the fact that, in spite of their complexity, the serious problems that afflict our world today can be resolved. No country or region should be doomed to live forever under the scourge of war and terror or be deprived of its rights. Under the auspices of the United Nations, the international community must react to crisis situations expeditiously and effectively. Experience has shown that belated and ineffectual reactions lead to the escalation of protracted and intractable conflicts, especially in Africa. Fortunately, however, the individual and collective efforts of many Governments in Africa are now easing these tensions, laying the essential bases for a solid, just and lasting peace.

The current situation in Angola is a reflection of that reality. For the first time since our independence, Angola and Angolans are now enjoying a climate of authentic peace, thanks to the allaying of factors that could have provoked a resurgence of the past war and insecurity. The efforts of the Angolan Government have blazed the trail from a fratricidal war towards irreversible peace, thanks to the goodwill and profound patriotic spirit demonstrated by all Angolans. Military hostilities effectively ended seven months ago. The peace understandings reached on 4 April have been scrupulously adhered to. Armed political parties no longer exist. Today, there is just one single army, under the authority of the Angolan Government.

The peace process will soon be concluded with the completion of the political tasks still pending under the Lusaka Protocol. In Angola, the process of economic and social rehabilitation is well under way and Government institutions have begun to operate normally throughout our national territory.

Clearly, given the current situation, it will be difficult for the Angolan Government to rise appropriately to the nation's economic and social challenges. Our main challenge now lies in the reintegration into society of thousands of combat veterans, 4 million displaced persons, refugees and thousands upon thousands of handicapped, war orphans and widows.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, members of the troika of observer nations in the peace process and all those who, in various ways, have contributed to the achievement of peace in Angola and who have pledged their assistance to solve the problems caused by the recently ended war.

Now at peace, Angola is more than ever ready and willing to take up its role as a sister nation of Africa and of the world. In the coming days, it will assume the presidency of the Southern Africa Development Community, the most important regional organization for the economic integration of southern Africa. Angola is also a candidate for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council in the elections scheduled for this session of the General Assembly. In these bodies, Angola intends to contribute actively towards an environment of stability, fostering the development and economic welfare of our peoples. Of central concern to Angola is the issue of peace in Central Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Only over time will it be possible to avert the widespread destabilization of the region.

Angola has been a factor of stability in Central Africa, having contributed substantially to the cessation of the wave of violence and to the relative peace now enjoyed by the population in the area.

In the context of these efforts, and under Angola's aegis, the Presidents of the DRC and Uganda signed an agreement in Luanda on 6 September. This was seen as a crucial step for the complete settlement of the Congolese conflict and for the establishment of good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

Angola welcomes the diplomatic initiatives undertaken by other countries to resolve the conflict, whether or not they are involved in the conflict, under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the understandings reached by the Congolese parties themselves. Angola advocates a new regional order of peace, security, cooperation and development, to be based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, democratic values and respect for human rights. We are willing to work together with other central and southern African countries and to offer them our good offices.

The instability in some parts of the world requires a greater measure of commitment by the United

Nations and the parties concerned for peace and security. Special attention should continue to be focused on the settlement of the Somali conflict, fostering unification of the country and consolidation of lasting peace there. In Western Sahara, we are concerned at delays in the process towards a referendum by those resident in the territory. Angola urges the parties involved to show flexibility and to continue cooperating with the United Nations and the African Union towards a negotiated settlement.

In the Middle East, renewed escalation of the violence may hamper current initiatives towards a peaceful settlement of the Palestine issue and the termination of Arab-Israeli crisis. We urge the parties to return to the negotiating table and to find a political settlement that will serve the best interests of all peoples living in the region and meet their security requirements.

Last July, the African States established the African Union as a more effective tool to help in the resolution of innumerable problems that are at the root of underdevelopment, such as poverty, foreign debt, lack of know-how and epidemics, among others. Our priority is to end the current economic stagnation in Africa. The establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development reflects the determination of African Governments to resolve the problems of economic backwardness, poverty and social exclusion that afflict the majority of their peoples and the continuing marginalization of Africa from international markets in terms of capital, services and goods. Angola hopes that the international community, especially donor nations, will lend Africa a helping hand by increasing official development assistance on the basis of fair and non-discriminatory criteria.

In closing, allow me to offer my hearty congratulations to Switzerland as it joins our family of members of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Juli Minoves-Triquell, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan*): First of all, may I congratulate President Jan Kavan, well known for his expertise in human rights, on his election to preside over this General Assembly. My congratulations also go to the outgoing President, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his hard work, and I commend the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, whose stewardship of the Organization in these trying times is particularly admirable. I also congratulate Switzerland on its admission to membership in the Organization.

The President returned to the Chair.

This session of the General Assembly, more than in recent years, seems caught between the past and the future — a tragic past, an uncertain future. In New York, and in the world, the catastrophe of the attacks of 11 September seems so present with us that we feel its imprint still upon us, as if our souls were marked by the fall of the towers and the cruel loss of life. We feel this past as a tangible, palpable weight, and we also sense the future pressing in upon us.

This past year, we have witnessed the war in Afghanistan, the fall of the Taliban and the establishment of a new Government in Kabul. Will there be intervention in Iraq, will there be more attacks in America, in Europe, or elsewhere? What will the future bring?

I ask these questions as Foreign Minister of the Principality of Andorra. Andorra is a small and peaceful country nestled in the protected valleys of the Pyrenees. We have lived in peace for nearly a thousand years. And yet we are not safe from the storms that buffet the world. Because of our small size, our reliance on trade and our relations with our neighbours and the world — our diplomacy, if you will — are of the greatest importance to our well-being. As we turn to the world, so, too, the world turns to us in the tens of millions of tourists that visit us every year.

Our industries, our citizens and our lives are as intimately linked to the world as to the mountains that surround us. This link was clear in the profound sadness of our people over the loss of life in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. We felt it as a visceral blow, a spontaneous expression of true sympathy.

The world surrounds us, although we often feel we can do little to influence the course of events. And yet what we do know is how actively to seek peace, and thereby ensure our future. It is about the future, the idea of the future, that I wish to speak today.

The future. In order to understand it, we must look not only to those events that are determining it, that are forming it even as we speak, but also to its own history as an idea. What is the history of the future?

Here I will only invoke, in passing, two earlier models that 500 years ago embodied our understanding of the future: God's providence and the wheel of Fortune. In the providential model of the future, God looks down on the full history of the world from "the high citadel of eternity" in the words of Thomas Aquinas. He sees everything, every grain of sand, every sparrow that falls. "There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow" Hamlet tells Laertes in Shakespeare's great play. But alongside this Christian understanding of God's providence is another figure, the pagan figure of Fortuna, who holds her wheel on which all men, king and commoner, rise and fall. Hamlet is also aware of her power; he is buffeted by the slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune, and he longs to end his life, but he fears God's prohibition against suicide. This very prohibition, shared by all three of the great religions of the West, was broken by the suicide attacks of 11 September. So, too, the prohibition that "thou shall not kill". Life is precious: it is given to us, and we cannot take it away.

In these two models of the future, humanity is passive. We are puppets — God or Fortune pulls our strings. But gradually we drew away from this passive enslavement to our fate, our destiny, and we struggled to master the future. The change in the future is first heard in the writings of that first theorist of diplomacy, the cunning Machiavelli. In *The Prince*, he wrote that a ruler must learn to profit from chance, or rather turn chance to his favour. In a typically violent metaphor, he tells the Prince that Fortune must be beaten. Machiavelli counsels him to wrestle with fortune and thereby create the future.

Although Machiavelli was advising an absolute monarch, and indeed his thought presaged a long period of monarchical absolutism, he understood that the rulers and the administrators could no longer afford to be passive objects of history. They had to consider, to think, to attack fortune; to hurl the slings and shoot the arrows back at her, if you will. In this shift, from passive object to active agent, the idea of the future begins its transformation. In this future, Machievelli's heirs — diplomats gathered here today — advise the modern princes, the democratically elected rulers of the world, for the general good of the people.

The future becomes an idea that we build through strategy, thought and action, through laws and treaties we enter into and must obey. That is the very purpose of the United Nations, the great parliament of the world's Governments, or in a less poetic but more apt image, a great, international factory, in that it builds the future: a future, not for the wealthy or the powerful, not for some nations, but for the world and its peoples.

Out of the ruins of the Second World War, the nations of the world joined to create a better future for all humanity. The belief that binds us together is the belief that together, only together, we can build a better world for all: a glorious city on the hill; a new Jerusalem; a Jerusalem of all religions, all beliefs; a city of tolerance; a city very much like New York.

That is why, I think, the terrorist attacks were so painful, for New York City is very much an expression of the United Nations, a place for all of the citizens of the world, all religions and all beliefs — the city of tolerance; a city that resolutely looks forward to the future; New York: city of dreams, city of the future.

Strangely, even as New York was profoundly wounded by these attacks, no other city, I think, has been so resolute in looking forward. The city was not, nor is it, spoiled by revenge. New York always looks to the future. While others may reproach the city for its indifference to its past, its forward-looking optimism is perhaps its greatest gift to the world.

So when we all saw in Andorra and elsewhere the attacks on the World Trade Center, my first response was that the suicide hijackers did not know New York. They did not know that this city has brought people from all countries together. They did not know the people who would die in the collapse of the towers: people from many of the religions and countries of the world.

But then I realized that perhaps they did know, that perhaps New York was their target, and that their target was the future. Or rather, their target was a future of tolerance: religious, cultural, personal. Indeed, it seems that the terrorists longed for purity, for a pure vision of the future in which the tolerance — the impurities — of New York would have no place.

They believed, but not in the uncertain future of New York, the restless striving for the new. They believed that with their deaths they would enter paradise of the afterlife. They believed, sacrilegiously, that they were the means of God's providence.

When the terrorists attacked America, they also attacked the future. They attacked the future of tolerance, a future controlled not by fate, but by

mankind. We cannot let our notion of the future fall with the towers, for the future is as fragile as the towers proved to be, perhaps more so. The future is built not of steel and stone, but of law and human sympathy.

In a way, I think, at least for the moment and perhaps necessarily, the terrorist attack on the future has damaged it. It demanded a strong response: the mission in Afghanistan, the continued destruction of Al Qaeda. That is the kind of response that the perpetrators of that violence would understand; a response that cannot be seen as a sign of weakness or vulnerability. It is a logical, and therefore necessary, response that the terrorists themselves unleashed.

But violence breeds violence, and the future of violence is simple destruction: nothing — and nothing will come of nothing. We run the risk of entering an endless war against a shadowy enemy; a war that, given the nature of the enemy, might prove very hard to win completely. And yet it must be won.

Our first and strongest line of defence against violence is the rule of law, with diplomacy to enact it. The United States, founded on the rule of law and on rights for all, understands that. Andorra understands that, because without law we would not have survived as a country for nearly a millennium.

That is why Andorra believes in and supports international law and trusts the United Nations, particularly its democratic members, to lead the world from its history of violence towards its common future. In relation to Iraq, Andorra supports the role of the United Nations, and we shall follow carefully the debates in the Security Council.

Terrorism is not a conventional war: there can be no treaties, no compacts, with terrorists. Law is vital for all countries, but terrorists do not care about laws. They are without a country and pose a particular danger and challenge. In that sense, we must embark on an aggressive reaching out to all people, an aggressive assertion of our common humanity. That might well be a media campaign, although it needs to come directly from all elected politicians and ministers. We are not trying to abstract issues or win a war of words. We need to pull everybody into the human compact. We need to recognize our individual vulnerability.

It was America's belief in its invulnerability that was so profoundly shaken by the terrorist attack. Yet if the sudden collapse of the towers and the fear and chaos of that day revealed a weakness, it also revealed strength: the strength of its citizens' resolve and the profound sympathy of all the peoples of the world.

In the wake of 11 September we recognize both the need for the rule of law and the cause of that need: the vulnerability of all people to malevolent attack. The motto of Andorra is *Virtus Unita Fortior*, which can be loosely translated as "United We Stand". That is not simply an appeal to patriotism or for a common front against the enemy. It is a recognition that together people are stronger, because alone we are weak and vulnerable.

Nothing can justify the attack of 11 September 2001. It is nevertheless important, here in the General Assembly, to consider the roots of violence. The terrorists turned their anger and alienation — political, cultural, economic and personal — into an abstract act of inhuman cruelty whose "solution" was the attack on the towers. Only in the cold world of abstraction does that attack symbolize anything beyond untold suffering. We need to pull violence back from abstraction into the world of human conversation.

If people feel excluded from the future, their alienation gives them a mad and violent certainty. We must get to work to rebuild an inclusive and tolerant idea of the future, an idea that is all too easily forgotten in war, an idea of the future in which everybody is protected from those who would destroy it, an idea of the future so strong that it includes those people who might otherwise be tempted by the madness of playing God.

That future is premised on awareness, not of the strength of the nuclear nations or of powerful economies, but of the vulnerability of this compact and of individual nations large and small. We must recognize the power of our vulnerability, for in this recognition, we recover our strength, our vision of a common future and the will to act together. It is together that we will win the war against terrorism.

The President: I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Education of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): Allow me first to salute fellow leaders, whose tireless work and

timeless commitment within and beyond the halls of the United Nations help shape a more secure world for our peoples. Improving the human condition is a charge to which we must remain resolutely committed. This we can achieve only through meaningful partnership.

Last year's efforts and the promise of community-building should not be excluded from this year's agenda. To build community partnership is crucial; but, more importantly, we need equity. To fulfil expectations of a better world, and to extract the lauded benefits of globalization, much harder work is required to reduce the gap between rich and poor nations and the haves and have-nots in our societies.

How can we explain the excruciating truths of a global marketplace where countries which are technologically deficient and heavily dependent on agriculture for their survival are encouraged, and even coerced, into opening their economies and embracing free trade, while larger and richer economies systematically subsidize their domestic agricultural output, mostly for political reasons, at a rate of between 22 to 60 percent annually.

Mr. President, your mandate this year — a very critical one — will be to ensure that the peoples of the world who suffer as a result of this inequity can truly renew their faith in us and believe again in the values of the United Nations.

My delegation has said repeatedly that globalization is not a bad thing. However, it continues to be managed badly. We insist that the current structure of the global economy is inherently flawed. It serves to reward the powerful and to punish the weak. While we appreciate that our world is undergoing profound and necessary changes, we cannot countenance abandoning the principles and values that bind us within the human family and the family of nations.

Globalization, in our view, must include true universal equity in its application of shared responsibility and good governance. The selective processes by which the agendas of the powerful few are advanced to the exclusion of the small, poor and economically vulnerable States must be addressed with a willingness to correct it. My delegation believes that the United Nations is uniquely positioned to respond to this challenge. Hence, my Government questions attempts to transform certain United Nations organs such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) into advisory bodies, and away from development assistance, which poor developing countries need now more than ever.

The United Nations must evolve as a dynamic, receptive and representative body to stem the tides that threaten us. It must build or strengthen social safety nets in many developing nations, not oversee processes geared at dismantling them. We must recommit to improving lives and to re-energizing our fight against poverty, hunger and ignorance. The United Nations has a significant role to play in this endeavour. Improved coordination of United Nations agencies is critical in achieving these objectives.

My delegation urges Member States to pledge their support, and hopes that they will, to ensure that the three conferences sponsored by the United Nations this year — the International Conference on Financing for Development, the special session on children and the World Summit on Sustainable Development — bear fruit. We remain hopeful that continued dialogue, partnership and the instrumentality of the United Nations will enable us to make meaningful progress.

A year has passed since the barbaric acts of 11 September. The foundations of our world views have changed dramatically, as has the way we look at ourselves and at our commitment to personal, national and international security. Again, Saint Kitts and Nevis unreservedly denounces any act of terrorism, anywhere in the world. We do not believe that the indiscriminate killing of innocent people as an expression of despair or oppression is an acceptable means of redress. We value highly the sanctity of life, and my Government is committed to its protection. We will work together in the United Nations to find international solutions to address this outrage. Let us ensure that the continuing war against terrorism is waged within the structures of international institutions such as the United Nations.

Year after year, we call on the international community to join our noble campaign to halt the trans-shipment of nuclear wastes through our Caribbean region, but this call goes unheeded. I reiterate our appeal today. Saint Kitts and Nevis urges sustained follow-up action to give meaning and life to the United Nations resolution adopted in 2000 declaring the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development.

Representation is crucial to the peoples of the world, and, as my delegation has done in the past, I wish to re-emphasize the status of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Membership in this Organization is in itself a validation and celebration of a people's fundamental human rights. We therefore lament the continued stalemate that results in the exclusion of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan from the United Nations family.

The contribution of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the global market, to the international community in the areas of technology, technical assistance and development assistance is unmistakably significant. Its participation in international activities can rival, and in many instances surpasses, that of many developed countries who are full Members of the United Nations. It is unfortunate and most regrettable, therefore, that the United Nations has been unable to create a meaningful and practical formula that would allow the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits to resolve this impasse, which stymies the genuine hopes and desires of millions of people who adhere to the principles of the United Nations Charter and whose nation is a model international citizen.

We have witnessed how involvement by the international community can facilitate positive developments, such as the emergence of nationhood. On behalf of my Government and in my own name, I welcome East Timor to the United Nations family. I salute it and its great leaders and pledge my Government's support in working with it in the years ahead on issues of mutual interest and, of course, of interest to the international fraternity of nations. I also extend a hand of welcome and friendship to the Government and the people of Switzerland. It has observed the United Nations for many years, so it is no stranger to its proceedings. The Organization will benefit greatly from its participation, and Saint Kitts and Nevis looks forward to collaborating with it in the future.

The incidence of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region is a real and growing threat to our security at a number of levels. In human terms, it threatens to devastate families and to create a generation of orphans. At the economic level, it places a tremendous burden on the health resources of our countries and has already begun to undermine the economic infrastructure of our countries. The most productive and able-bodied are at risk, and those infected with the disease are less and less able to contribute to the economic activity and growth of their countries. Instead, they require medical and financial support. Resources earmarked for other areas have to be redeployed to address the new pandemic.

It is clear that pharmaceutical companies and Governments that support them can do much more to reduce the cost of antiretroviral drugs. Private-sector companies must also do more to assist employees and families suffering from HIV/AIDS. It is regrettable that the $10 billion in resources required by the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are yet to be realized.

Saint Kitts and Nevis repeats its call for new paradigms to redress the inequities of globalization. We urge the international community to develop appropriate frameworks to promote fundamental freedoms as a comprehensive whole, not only in terms of political rights, such as the right to self-expression and the right to vote, but also the human right to economic development. Only when we respond to the genuine needs of humankind — only when the hungry are fed, the vulnerable made strong, the weak, dispossessed, disenfranchised and oppressed empowered and made to feel a sense of belonging, and when they are free to participate fully in issues relating to their future — can we have a world where anarchy, terrorism, inter-State conflicts and war recede.

What we ask for is certainly attainable. We simply call on the United Nations to facilitate systems where partnership, collective responsibility and respect for each other are allowed to flourish. This is possible once States realize that national policies in a global economy have international consequences. Politics may still be local, but when we take action locally we must remember that we are also global citizens. Thus, a principal goal of globalization should be to level the playing field to provide equal opportunity. Strategies, as a consequence, should reflect confidence-building measures for free trade and sustainable development.

In conclusion, let me say that the United Nations has stood firm for peace, prosperity and security for all peoples. It has done much to ensure peace and justice throughout the world, consistent with the principles of international law. It has set itself lofty goals for this millennium: basic education for all, eradicating poverty, reducing HIV/AIDS, and ensuring sustainable

development for all. Our people and, indeed, all citizens of the global community pray that the political will will be found to translate those lofty goals into reality on the ground. Positive action, rather than eloquent speech, must become the defining quality of the United Nations in the third millennium.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Frederick A. Mitchell, M.P., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Public Service of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): On behalf of Prime Minister Perry G. Christie, the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The Bahamas is confident that this session will be steered to a fruitful conclusion under your able guidance. You and the other members of your equally competent Bureau may be assured of the full support of the Bahamas in the performance of your duties. I take this opportunity also to congratulate your predecessor from the Republic of Korea for his skilful leadership during the fifty-sixth session.

The right to self-determination and the full, fair and unhindered expression of the will of the people are principles held in the highest esteem by the Bahamas. The Bahamas looks forward to welcoming the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the United Nations when it takes its place in the Assembly in just a few weeks. The Bahamas is also pleased to welcome Switzerland to this family of nations.

The world has agreed that the United Nations is a place where nations large and small are equal, where disputes of an international character may be resolved peacefully, and where the use of force is supported only in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The Bahamas and all other nations represented here have signed on to this contract, a contract that, in our view, is inviolate and must be honoured. This should not be a matter of convenience and, in our view, applies to all nations, large and small. Today, I reaffirm the commitment of the Bahamas to the United Nations Charter and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government and the people of the Bahamas believe in the United Nations, and will continue to support it and to uphold the founding principles on which its effectiveness and success depends.

We reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law, and an abiding respect for the right to self-determination, the sovereignty of nations and the right of people everywhere to expect that their Government, freely and democratically elected, will protect their rights. We urge world leaders to accept that the freely expressed will of the people is their sole claim to legitimacy and that the will of the people should not be subverted by any means. We reject parochialism as a justification for obfuscating the true intent and will of a people as expressed through the ballot box.

The Government of the Bahamas believes in good governance at all levels as a fundamental human right. As an adjunct to that right, we have committed ourselves to deepening our long-standing democratic tradition. General elections are not the end of the story. The citizen must continue to have a role in the governance of the country. Civil society must be actively encouraged to develop and engage in the affairs of the country. The Bahamas is committed to consulting its people on all matters of national importance. This becomes critical as our country examines its role and fulfils its obligations to other Member States on the bilateral and multilateral levels.

The first anniversary of the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, near Washington, D.C., and the tragedy in Pennsylvania, were commemorated just a few days ago. On that occasion, the Bahamas reiterated its condemnation of those acts as attacks on our values and on our civilization. Such acts must not go unpunished. We therefore support measures to bring the guilty to justice and to prevent similar attacks in all their forms and manifestations. We are resolute in our views on this. We pause to remember the families and friends in countries around the world who lost loved ones in those attacks.

In our own country we are seeking to recover from the knock-on effects of the unemployment the attacks caused. We are taking steps to rebuild our economy. We have initiated changes to our domestic law and we have, in the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Organization of American States, become parties to international conventions to bolster our capacity to play our necessary role in the fight against these attacks on our way of life. We will continue to give our full support to international efforts to eliminate this scourge. At the same time, we are

keen to ensure that in this fight the fundamental rights and freedoms of our citizens are not eroded.

The Bahamas believes that there is no better legacy that we can leave to the generations to come than an Earth that is safe and secure and that can sustain life. We firmly believe that there can be development without harm to the environment. We emphasized that point at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The environment is not only the biological medium that supports the life of the people of the Bahamas, but it is also the central reason for our economic success. The Government has therefore given high priority to preserving and protecting the environment, and has taken practical steps to do so.

We reiterate our concern expressed at the Summit about the threat posed to small island developing States by all manifestations of climate change, including the rise in sea levels. We have repeatedly expressed our grave concern to some of our industrialized partners about the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean and about the disastrous effects it might have on the economies of the Bahamas and the Caribbean. Tourism is our primary industry. An accident involving spent nuclear fuel will almost certainly destroy it. We do not accept that, because the risk of accidents is remote, the transhipment of nuclear waste should be allowed to continue. We make the assertion today and ask for the transhipment to cease.

The Bahamas joins in urging the early ratification and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and in reaffirming its commitment to sustainable development and to the Political Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The international community faces a broad range of political, economic, social and cultural issues. We have made inroads, but not sufficient to stem the spiral of persistence of poverty, hunger, human rights abuses, crime and diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, or to address the vulnerability of small island developing States. The Bahamas is particularly concerned about HIV/AIDS and the slow progress in fighting the disease.

The critical question on HIV/AIDS and all the other issues is: Where do we go from here? This body has made important commitments to the world. There are reviews, platforms and programmes of action. Our respective publics may be forgiven for their cynicism and the criticism levelled that the United Nations is a talking shop. Our view, however, is that it is better to talk than fight. Talking is, in fact, a form of action and there is no doubt that, with regard to HIVAIDS, discussion of the problem is central to the solutions. But our respective publics are looking for and require more immediate money and direct action. We must not be accused of inaction in the face of human suffering and adversity.

We in the Bahamas have ably demonstrated our determination to play our part in these endeavours. We have been credited regionally and internationally for our model programmes, particularly in respect to our treatment of and efforts to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. We especially wish to thank the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, now celebrating its hundredth year, for the cooperation they have extended to the Bahamas and for their stellar work in the area of international health. We wish to commend the recent initiative to provide antiretroviral drugs to countries of the Caribbean to assist in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Bahamas is concerned about the present global economic order. We raise questions about whether globalization and trade liberalization can indeed function as vehicles for progressive change in all countries large and small, developed and developing. We are committed to adapting to change, but at a pace and in a manner and form that are consistent with the way we live. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), of which the Bahamas is a part, has taken up the challenges of ensuring a degree of stability among its member countries in the face of globalization. But the Bahamas believes that more can and must be done to assist our Caribbean Community to adapt to these externally imposed changes through equitable and sensitive trade policies and by reform of the international financial institutions and their lending practices.

The Bahamas is the unwitting transit point for illegal activities: the smuggling of human beings and the illicit trade in narcotic drugs. The United States is the ultimate target. We are also suffering from increased violent crime from guns smuggled into our country from the United States. These guns are terrorizing our society. The Bahamas is working closely with the United States and other neighbouring countries to address these issues. There must be a

stronger effective action to reduce demand for drugs in the receiving country. There must be more effective action taken to stop the flow of illegal guns.

The Bahamas has taken an active interest in the peace and stability of its sister CARICOM State, Haiti. Given our longstanding and developing relations with Haiti, positive steps taken to provide assistance and support for Haiti give us great hope. We are especially pleased with the efforts of the Inter-American Development Bank to work with the Government of Haiti to remove the existing financial hurdles that impede development efforts. We also welcome the recent Organization of American States (OAS) resolution and the announcement by the United States that it would contribute additional resources to the OAS special mission in Haiti. Illegal migration from Haiti causes a serious drain on the resources of the Bahamas. In addition to Haitian-Bahamian bilateral efforts to address this problem, the Bahamas believes that targeted international initiatives, with the cooperation of the Government of Haiti, represent the best hope for the Haitian people.

Illegal immigration from Cuba also adversely affects us. The Bahamas continues to call for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States of America. We believe that such normalization would be central to solving that dimension of the migration problem.

The Bahamas welcomes the entry into force of the Rome Statute on 1 July 2002 and the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a critical tool in the fight against violations of humanitarian international law and crimes against humanity.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people is a matter of concern. There should be peace between them. We support the peaceful settlement of this issue in accordance with all applicable United Nations resolutions. Every people deserves to have a State to call its own in peace and security.

The Bahamas is concerned about developments in Africa. As part of the African diaspora, we wish to see Africa prosper, wars cease and equitable policies applied for all of the many and varied people of that continent.

We support the reform of the Security Council. The Bahamas believes that the time has come for us to take the hard decisions and to agree to a practical programme of reform that takes fully into account the need for equitable membership and for a more democratic and transparent Council.

The Bahamas is a small country whose voice, without the indispensable forum provided by the United Nations, would be lost or at best ignored. Here, irrespective of size and wealth, we have the ability to speak with equal voice and to vote with equal power on matters that affect the quality of our lives today and that will impact the type of world that we leave in place for future generations. This is why it is vitally important that we preserve and respect the integrity of this Organization. Member States are bound to come here for redress and should not act unilaterally outside the bounds of the Charter. The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations as enshrined in its Charter. I leave the Assembly with that commitment here today.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.